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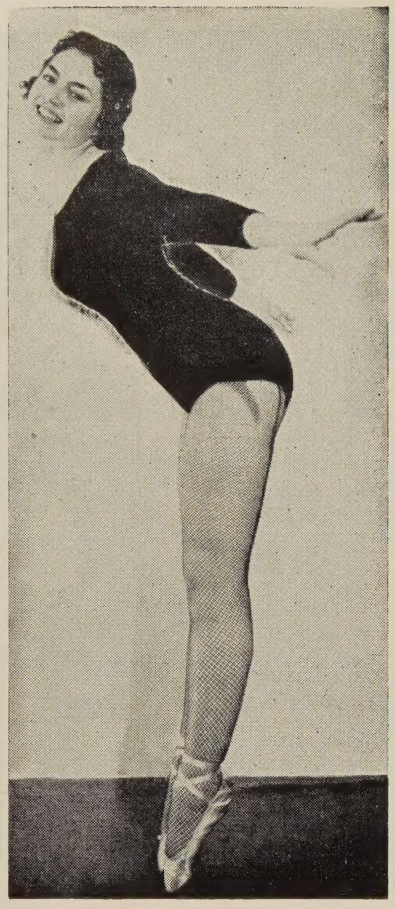

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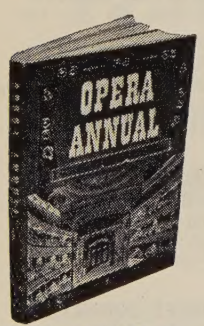

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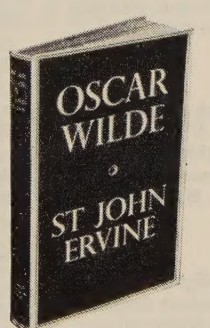

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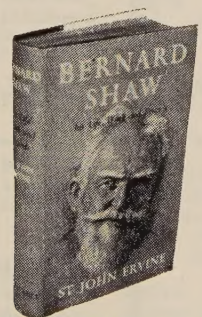

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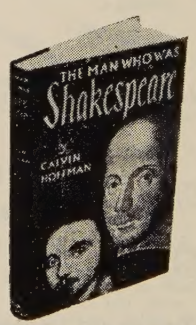

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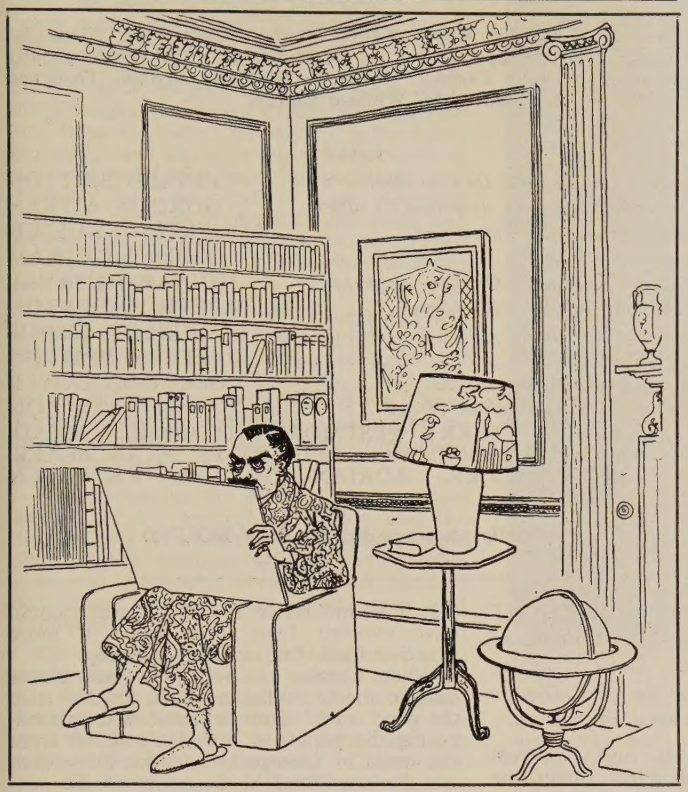

A SELF-PORTRAIT

OSBERT LANCASTER

OSBERT LANCASTER does not look everyone's idea of a ballet designer. His stocky build, bristling moustache and ruddy complexion might suggest a retired army officer, yet his double-breasted striped suit and discreetly flamboyant carnation is perhaps more like a stockbroker. Yet look again ; perhaps he is an M.F.H., or a racehorse owner, landlord of a very successful West End pub, cabinet minister. He so obviously looks somebody — but few would guess a ballet designer.

Not that he really is. Lancaster, by profession, is a cartoonist, and has just finished 25 years of daily cartoons for the *Daily Express,* during which time Maudie Littlehampton and her ever-increasing circle have become as much a part of British life, although at a different social strata, as the Giles family. Lancaster was introduced into ballet design by John Cranko in 1951. His first ballet was *Pineapple Poll,* which, if you are given to understatement, enjoyed a fair success. The Portsmouth dockyards of *Poll* were followed the next year by the Belgravian porticos of *Bonne-Bouche,* after which two years later he found himself producing the designs for the Hungarian village of *Coppélia* and the Neapolitan harbour of *Napoli.* Since then he has designed operas, *Don Pasquale* at Sadler's Wells and *The Rake's Progress* at Glyndebourne, but has not until this month returned to ballet, with the designs for Ashton's production of *La Fille Mal Gardée.*

His work as a designer bears as unmistakable a signature as his work as a cartoonist. Always a keen, if sometimes satirical, commentator on the architectural scene — his pre-war book *From Pillar to Post* is one of the best, and certainly the funniest, guides to domestic architecture ever produced — his décors always reveal an affectionate eye for place. His designs are bold, dashing and paint-box fresh, and it will be interesting to see how far he has succeeded in subjugating his own swashbuckling personality to the demands of the historic *ballet d'action.* Whatever are the results they will be unmistakably Lancastrian.

FRONT COVER : The two dancers of the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company in a Bontoc War Dance. **This dance, one of the opening numbers in the company's present programme, is one of the ancient dances from the mountain regions of northern Luzon. The company, which opened a season at the Palace Theatre, London on January 12, received great critical acclaim and the whole production provides a most exhilarating evening of dance. It should not be missed. Next month** Dance and Dancers **will review the company in full.**

FEBRUARY 1960 11th YEAR OF PUBLICATION Vol. 11 No. 2

Dance and Dancers

Editor: PETER WILLIAMS *Associate Editor:* CLIVE BARNES
Assistant Editor: E. C. Mason.

WORLD'S LARGEST SALE IN THE FIELD

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Back on the Boom?

IN the years which immediately followed the cessation of hostilities we heard a great deal of what was called the " ballet boom ". What this really meant I was never quite certain because popular companies did well, as they do now, and other companies, good as they may have been though not appealing so much to popular taste, did less well — also just as they do now. However, there *was* a lot of interest in ballet at the time and many people who never gave it much thought suddenly found themselves swept up into it, and they are the people who form the main body of today's ballet audience. The old guard, those who previously had worshipped at the principally Russian feet of Diaghilev's and Colonel de Basil's dancers, stayed away — they still do.

The fact that for several years people had been pretty starved of spectacle in the theatre may have had a little to do with it, and there is no question but that the war contributed greatly to the rise of British ballet, but that was not really the reason for the resounding " Boom ! boom ! " which drummed around the late 'forties. Odd as it may seem the principal reason for it was a mainly unfortunate, at least from a ballet point of view, film — *The Red Shoes.* This gave a very untrue, highly-coloured picture of the world of ballet, the dance sequences in it, though effective in a glossy film musical way, bore little relation to the kind of spectacle that anyone would expect, or wish, to see in the repertory of any self-respecting ballet company. But, and this is a " but " that nobody is exalted enough to ignore, it was sensational box-office and the film caught the imagination of the whole world, especially those who had previously evinced no interest in an art which they had cursorily dismissed as " toe dancing ". There is not the slightest doubt that those sanguinary shoes smoothed the path for companies touring the world.

A decade has passed and no honest person will kid themselves that ballet popularity has done anything other than wane in the past few years apart from the momentous emergence of the Bolshoi ballet from Russia. Dr. Czinner's film of this company's London visit lit a spark that has caused the ballet-pulse to throb again, even if not too violently, in places over the globe unlikely to see the Bolshoi in the flesh. Now Czinner has immortalised the Royal Ballet in a far better film in which Margot Fonteyn is revealed as one of the great stars of the cinema, and it looks as though this successful marriage of ballet and cinema may make the 'sixties a ballet boom decade, as did *The Red Shoes* for the late 'forties and early 'fifties.

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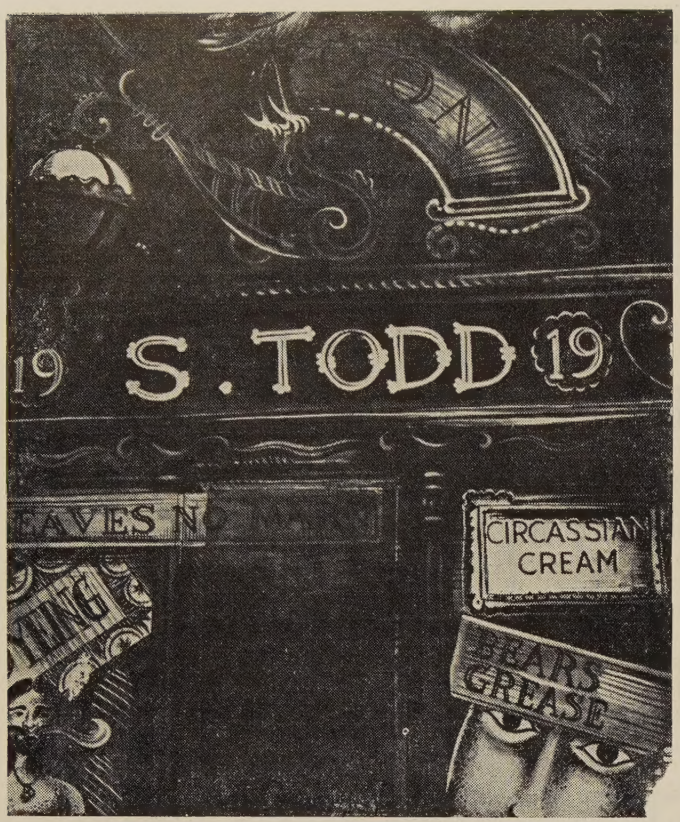


MORE THAN IT SEEMS: A detail of Alix Stone's setting showing the Demon Barber's shop front.

Sweeney Todd

First given by the Royal Ballet at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, on December 10, 1959. Choreography and book by John Cranko. Music by Malcolm Arnold. Designed by Alix Stone. Lighting by William Bundy.

CAST

Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber	DONALD BRITTON
Sergeant Lightfoot, Johanna's Father	GORDON AITKEN
Mrs. Lovett, the Piewoman	MARGARET KNOESEN
Man with Watch	SIMON MOTTRAM
Tobias, Sweeney's Orphan Apprentice	JOHAAR MOSAVAL
Johanna, in love with Mark	ELIZABETH ANDERTON
Johanna's Mother	SHIRLEY BISHOP
A Sailor	JEFFREY PHILLIPS
Mark Ingestre, Royal Navy	DESMOND DOYLE
Colonel Jeffrey, Indian Army	IAN HAMILTON
Policemen	TERRY WESTMORLAND, ROBERT MEAD, MICHAEL COLEMAN, COLIN JONES, ALAN BEALE, ALAN ALDER, ADRIAN GRATER, KATHLEEN GELDARD.

Specially photographed by ROY ROUND

STORY

THE ballet is set in Edwardian London, a London terrorised by the attentions of a monstrous mass-killer. A group of policemen are already searching rather ineffectually for the killer when the curtain rises. Sweeney Todd comes out of his Fleet Street shop to pass the time of day with his neighbour and — for Todd is in fact the much-hunted murderer — accomplice, Mrs. Lovett, whose adjoining pie shop provides a useful and even profitable means of disposing of the victims' bodies.

Sweeney no sooner polishes off one of his victims than the sailor hero Mark Ingestre appears accompanied by his friend Colonel Jeffrey. Sweeney persuades Mark to enter his shop, and almost immediately has him sliding down into the basement by the contrivance of his mechanical barber's chair.

After Mark's disappearance both Sweeney's apprentice, Tobias, and Colonel Jeffrey have their suspicions aroused. Tobias is given one of Mrs. Lovett's pies and finds somewhat curious remains inside it. Colonel Jeffrey goes to visit Johanna, Mark's fiancée, to confide his fears. Sweeney, with the enthusiastic approval of Johanna's drunken father and wispy mother, is paying court to the fair Johanna, and interrupts the Colonel's visit, causing him to hide under a convenient and very mobile table.

Sweeney returns to his shop, and is alarmed by the sudden reappearance of Mark who, despite his descent into the cellar, has survived. But just as he painfully climbs back into the shop, the fiendish barber's-chair automatically throws him down again. Sweeney, who thinks he has seen a ghost, is badly rattled by the turn of events. Prior to decamping with the booty from his hapless victims, he knocks off his partner, Mrs. Lovett. His flight is now made imperative by Colonel Jeffrey and the Police, who have discovered his secret and break into the shop. But Sweeney escapes with a Gladstone bag containing his spoils. After a chase backwards and forwards through the environs of Fleet Street, he goes to ground in his shop.

But the persevering and seemingly indestructible Mark once more clambers back from the cellar to terrify Sweeney with his surprising apparition. His pursuers break in, and Sweeney, pretty well demoralised by now, is at last shot. Mark and his Johanna are joyfully reunited, and everyone, apart from the deceased, celebrate with the latest importation from America — rag-time. The revels are brought to a conclusion, by the sound of a laugh, suspiciously like Sweeney's, coming from the shop. Tobias enters, stropping his razor and smiling hopefully. Fleet Street is suddenly empty.

CHOREOGRAPHY

EVERYONE, I hope, knows about Sweeney Todd. Certainly everyone seeing John Cranko's new ballet had *better* know about him, for the story is neither related in the programme nor adequately told on the stage. However, for anyone with some basic idea of the plot, the events are at least apparent, if not altogether clear, and in any case motivation was hardly the strongest suit of George Dibdin Pitt's original play upon which Cranko has based his scenario.

In one sense at least Sweeney Todd makes a commendable subject for a British choreographer, for he has become part of the English theatrical tradition. Pitt's play was written in 1842 for the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton, and survived up until comparatively recent times — I myself can recall seeing Tod Slaughter playing the Demon Barber. Cranko has understandably taken very considerable liberties with his source, condensing the plot down to its barest essentials, and cutting out many of the original characters and incidents. Dr. Lupin, Pitt's sanctimonious cleric. has, for example, been removed, and his function as Johanna's unwelcome suitor is taken by Sweeney himself. What is left is probably as workmanlike a scenario as you could get from the play, and it is difficult to see how Cranko could have evolved from this theme a more effective basis for his choreography.

Where Cranko has been even more clever than in the formulation of his libretto is in the good sound sense he has shown in transposing the period of the play's action from the times of George II into the Edwardian era. Perhaps fired by accounts of the success of the Broadway musical *Redhead* — with which the ballet, possibly fortuitously, appears to have a remarkable number of things in common — he has obviously realised that while even the adjective "Georgian" recalls little to our minds but architecture and silver, Edwardiana is loaded with atavistic nostalgia. Gas-lamps and hansoms, music-halls and murders, flamboyance and naughtiness — we unquestionably love it all. What is equally important, the Edwardian period is danceable, where the Georgian just as emphatically is not. Music-hall routines, early rag-time and comic strutting make the Edwardians a natural for the choreographer, and it seems strange that apart from Margaret Dale's *The Great Detective* no one has ever previously made even a wholehearted preliminary survey of the territory.

So far as structure goes Cranko in *Sweeney Todd* has kept to much the same pattern as he used previously in his two earlier comic ballets on traditional British themes, *Pineapple Poll* and *Bonne-Bouche*. The similarity with *Pineapple Poll* is in some ways very marked, and like it the present ballet not only concludes with a *divertissement* tacked on the end after the narrative is complete, but also finally finishes with a pay-off joke, so that the emergence of Mrs. Dimple as Britannia in *Poll* is countered, if not matched, by Tobias's assumption of the razor in *Sweeney*.

It seems plain to me that when Cranko went for his first rehearsal he carried in his pocket most of the makings of a first-rate ballet. Incidentally, if anyone had asked me whether it would have been possible to have made a ballet out of *Sweeney Todd* I would have said no. Cranko proved me wrong, not by what he did but by what he showed he might have done. For, unfortunately, what in fact emerged was at moments almost as puerile as that other ballet with which Noël Coward started

nearly all intelligent London mourning.

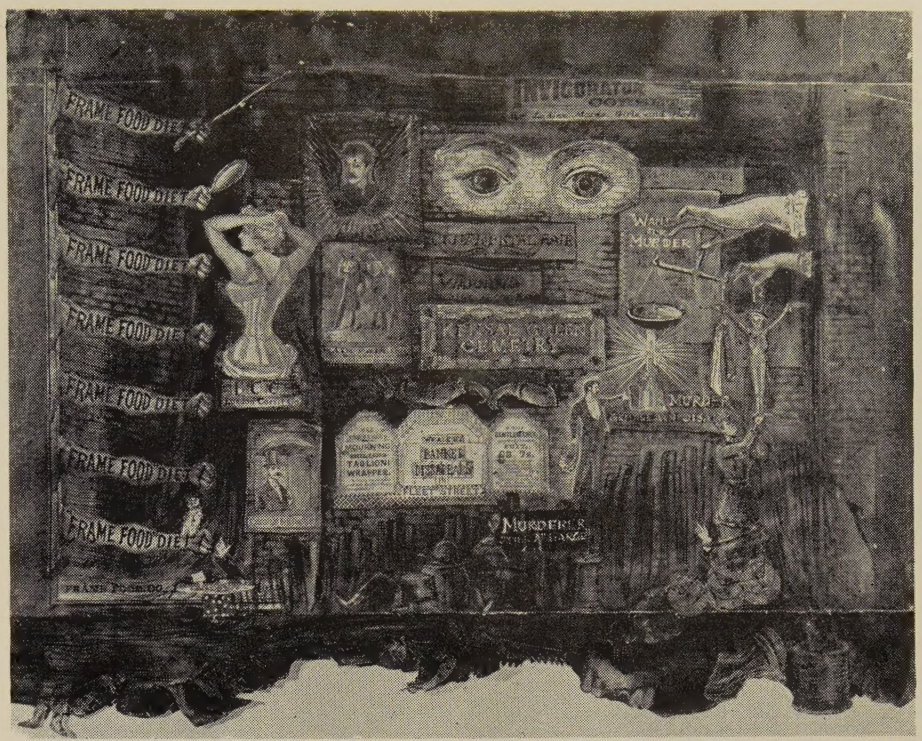
Fundamentally Cranko's basic mistake seems to me that he set his sights far too low; he made a witless burlesque out of what could have been a genuinely funny black comedy. The introduction of Keystone Cops — possibly the *Redhead* influence again — gave him a few ready-made belly-laughs, but fairly effectively destroyed any hope he had of having the ballet taken seriously, and all art, even comedy, even, if you like, vaudeville, *must* be taken seriously. Possibly had he handled these Keystone Cops as cleverly as Robbins did years ago in the musical *High Button Shoes,* Cranko could have got away with it. But he didn't and couldn't.

Yet Cops apart, the rest of the ballet was nothing to write home about, not even from darkest Stratford. There was scarcely any choreographic characterisation, and the whole ballet never really rose above a kind somnambulistic competence that might be expected from dancing briefly improvised for a TV show.

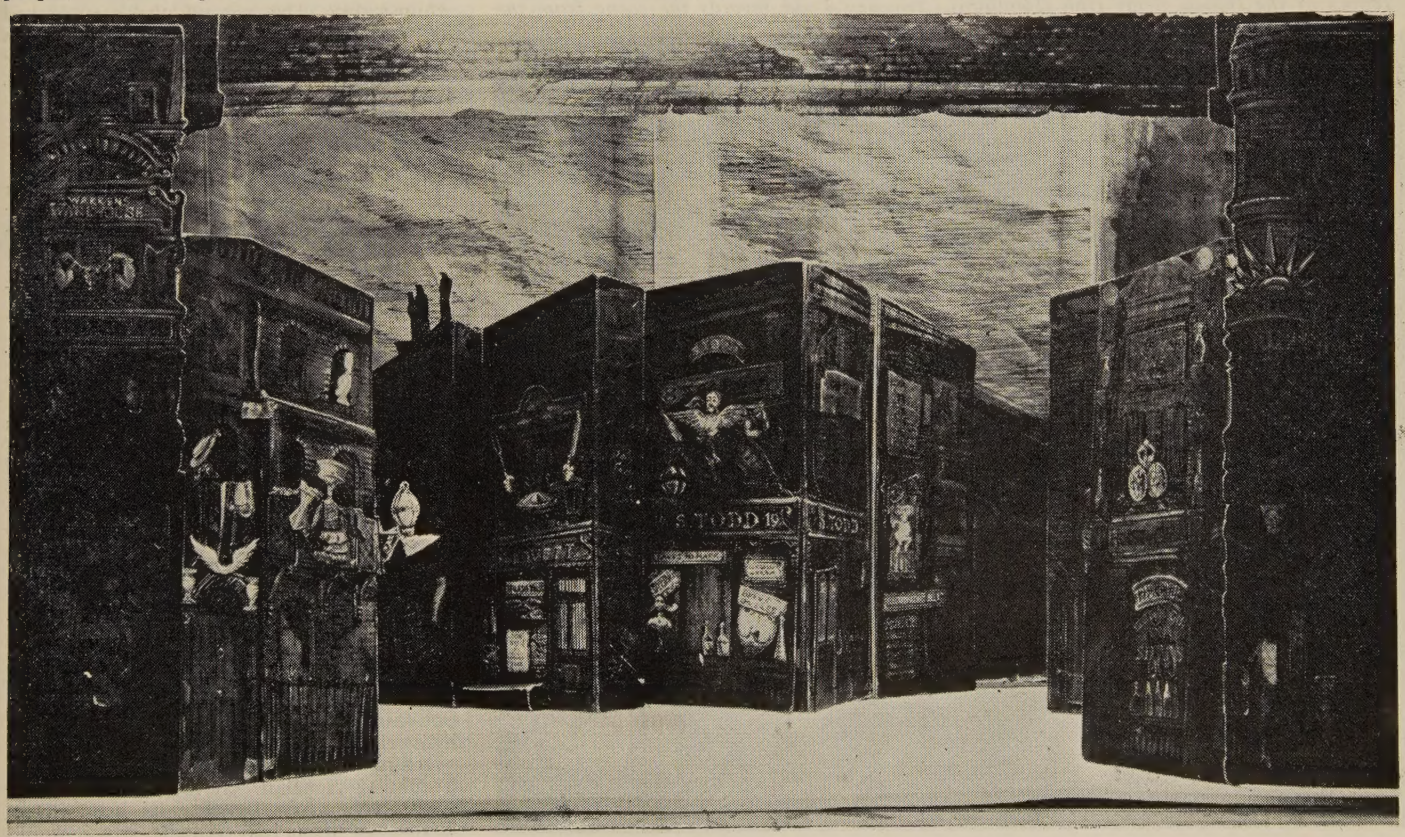
Best things in the ballet — apart from aspects of the general conception and the wonderfully evocative décor — were some quite funny business with a moving table that was genuinely inventive, and parts of the chase which, by and large, was well produced.

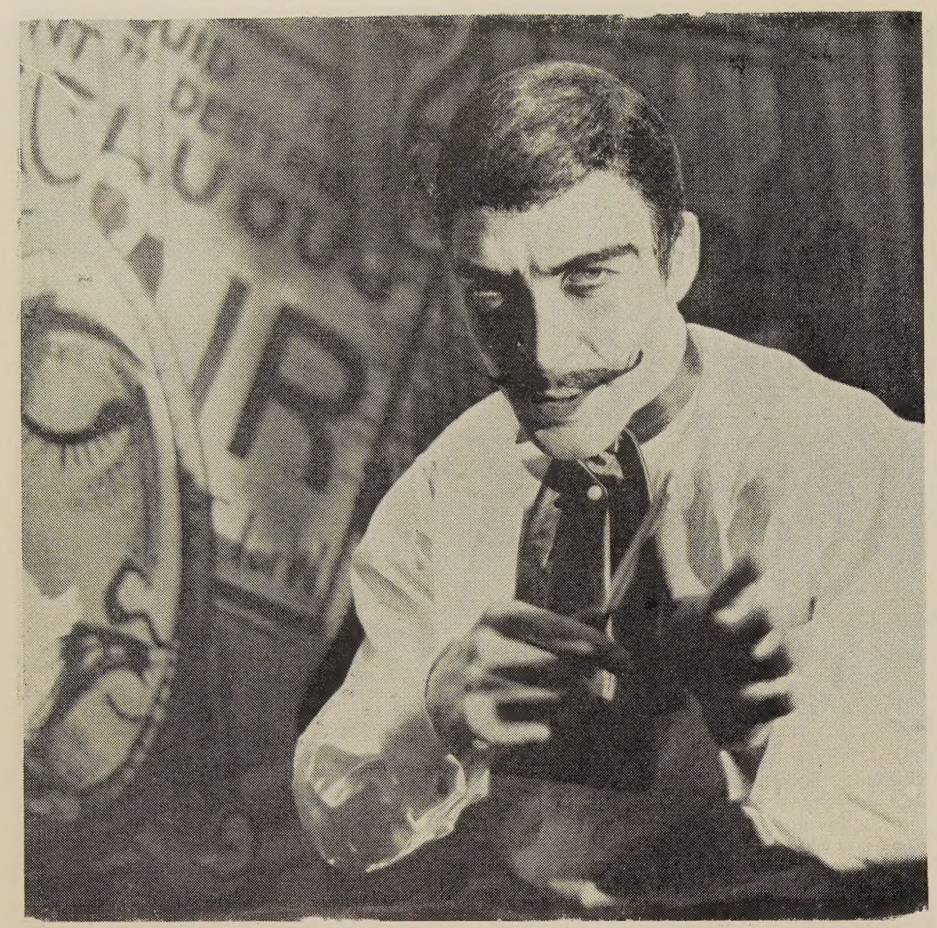
Of course you can say the ballet is good of its kind — but so is arsenic. You can say that one must not expect too much from lighthearted entertainment. You can say that the Royal Ballet needs light ballets to ballast the high seriousness of *Coppélia,* etc. You can say that it makes audiences, or undemanding hyenas for that matter, split their sides with laughter. You can say how nice it is to see the Royal Ballet letting its hair down, any distance, any way. You can say all this, and you can say it until your eyes goggle and your forehead turns purple, but nothing will convince me that *Sweeney Todd* has not got to be considered on precisely the same standards that are applied to *Antigone.* And after *Antigone* it comes as a cruel disappointment.

Yet one last point must be made in all fairness to Cranko. This ballet was, I understand, created and rehearsed while the company was touring, dancing in a different theatre each week. If anyone can tell me the name of one other national ballet cap-



DROP CURTAIN AND SETTING: Above is Alix Stone's original design for the Sweeney Todd *drop curtain. Instead of doing the usual designs, followed by a model, she has designed straight on to the scale model using actual advertisements cut out of magazines and programmes of the period in addition to embellishments of her own. Below is the model for the main setting. The Barber's shop (back centre) and Sergeant Lightfoot's house (on the left) both open out so that it is possible to see the interiors. Photos: Donald Southern.*





MOST FOUL SLAYER : Donald Britton, above, as Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber. Below, Todd's Apprentice Tobias (Johaar Mosaval), and Mark Ingestre of the Royal Navy (Desmond Doyle), look at a string of pearls found in the barber's shop by Colonel Jeffrey of the Indian Army (Ian Hamilton). Sweeney Todd regards the scene from the background.

able of such inspired idiocy I will make them a personal present of a suitably inscribed cut-throat razor next Christmas.

DANCING

DONALD BRITTON was so good as Sweeney Todd that Cranko ought to consider one day using this portrayal in a ballet. But whatever are the failings of Cranko's choreography here, his work as a producer has obviously been excellent and the standard of performance was very high indeed.

Britton did, however, stand out, and despite the limitations of the ballet he gave a clear indication of the kind of performance that might have been forthcoming if Cranko's choreography had matched his production. All his movements were sinister yet grotesque, funny but chilling. There was not a great deal for him to do in the way of dancing, but his staring, maniac eyes, his perfectly mirthless leer and stealthy tread all had just enough exaggeration to be comic, but not so much that one lost sight of the unexaggerated reality lurking just beneath the surface.

Margaret Knoesen as Mrs. Lovett, the part originally intended for Margaret Hill, did valiantly in a rôle that had not been very well worked out, and the ballet would have gained if her grinning, creeping scarecrow had been given greater prominence. Much the same could be said of Johaar Mosaval's Tobias, who wandered through the ballet plaintively saucer-eyed giving a tiny part a dangerously uncalled-for depth that exposed by contrast a good deal of the surrounding shallowness.

Desmond Doyle as Mark spent most of the ballet under the stage, but when he periodically came up for air he made a stalwart and charming hero, quite worthy of the intelligent and somewhat flighty Johanna of Elizabeth Anderton. Ian Hamilton wore his topee with a Poona-like distinction, and gave his characterisation a neatly contrived whimsicality. The rest of the cast looked like a group of high-spirited young dancers out on parole from innumerable performances of *Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Beauty*. But then, of course, they were.

Clive Barnes.

MUSIC

TWO performances of *Sweeney Todd* in quick succession at Stratford left me with no very strong impression of the qualities of Malcolm Arnold's score. Set beside the lucid, unpretentious clarity of his suite of dances which formed the basis of *Solitaire,* given in the same Stratford programme, *Sweeney Todd* seemed an ambivalent musical mush without distinction of style or strength of purpose. Perhaps the negative impression it gave was the result of being somewhat negative music in its conflict of features. Most of Arnold's work is a curious mixture of refinement and frivolity — the two sides of his musical coin, with now one, now the other, uppermost. In this latest score they seemed to cancel each other out, leaving the themes bland, featureless and bereft of character.

Assuming that he was aware of the kind of ballet Cranko had in mind, the composer would seem to have been faced with two alternatives. Neither, to my mind, would be particularly attractive. Either he might have provided music in the boisterous but respectably "symphonic" manner of his lightweight works like the *Tam O'Shanter* overture, and risk the contrast with Cranko's plebeian choreography, or he could have given frivolity its head in an unabashed music-hall pastiche, which would

have been a waste of this composer's talent. All the same, I fancy that one of these (probably the second) would have had more effect in its context than the compromise between the two for which Arnold apparently settled.

He has said that the music-hall tradition means a lot to him, because "it's purely national, our only unbroken musical tradition." Its influence is vivid enough in the simple dance rhythms of foxtrot, two-step and waltz, and the ragtime flavours, which are prominent in *Sweeney Todd*. Yet Arnold fails to put them to any use that is either stylistically clever or musically memorable. The score is intentionally allusive, but the allusions are used as ends in themselves, for there can be no musical or balletic justification for the percussion player, for example, to thump a woodblock in time with the Apprentice's hiccoughs. In its melody, harmony and rhythm, the music as a whole is conceived chiefly as a vehicle for sound and visual effect without substance of imagination in its own right. John Lanchbery conducted: there was nothing more to be done with it.

Noël Goodwin.

DECOR

EDWARDIANA, both in interior decoration and stage décor, has been rammed down our throats over the past fifteen years to a point near to choking. One more yard of bobble fringe, just one more niché stuffed with bric-a-brac, just one more mound of wax fruits under glass, and chronic indigestion is inevitable. As has happened so often in the past, the Orient has stepped in at the right moment, and the innate taste of China and Japan, with the elimination and simplicity that has always been the keynote of decoration in both countries, and dust-gathering Edwardiana has been swept up in the dust-pan, leaving only the best examples to show their true worth in their new uncluttered surroundings.

Just old picture hat is what I had imagined the designs of *Sweeney Todd* would be because there is no more Edwardian theatrical manifestation than the old melodramas which used to storm barns and provincial theatres in Edwardian Britain. Contrary to all my fears, Alix Stone has swept away all the dust and cobwebs from Edwardiana and her designs come up as fresh, witty and elegant as anything designed for a Roland Petit ballet, and higher than that it seems one cannot go in this present age of ballet design.

What in fact Alix Stone has done is to achieve a glorious piece of montage. Her drop curtain, for instance, is a conglomeration of scraps culled from the advertisement pages of Edwardian magazines and theatre programmes and arranged with extreme wit on an aubergine wall. It sets just the right note for the atmosphere of the sinister farce which follows. This advertisement-crammed curtain, like those which were once a regular feature of provincial theatres and music-halls, sets the balance between melodrama and farce and demands that the audience should not take the ensuing quasi-tragedies too seriously.

Before this curtain rises and we pass on to consider the main setting, this is possibly the moment to pause and consider the true nature, use and abuse of the drop curtain. This piece of canvas is not, as some people imagine, just an extra piece of scenery which rich companies can afford so that they can make their productions look more lavish than they usually are. The drop curtain has a very specific and important part to play. It is there to draw the audience into the mood and atmosphere of the work that is to follow. When properly used it can achieve something that the choreographer possibly cannot — it can save many valuable minutes of explanatory choreography, it can also put the audience in the right frame of mind for the ensuing work. One of the best examples of the right use for a drop curtain was to be found in Picasso's original curtain for *Le Tricorne*. Although this grey/blue drawing of Spanish ladies watching a corrida had little to do

MORE VICTIMS FOR THE BARBER: Above, Mark Ingestre awaiting his shave while Sweeney Todd sharpens his razor. Below, having supposedly dispatched yet another victim, Sweeney Todd goes to claim the hand of the apparently deceased's beloved Johanna (Elizabeth Anderton). Her parents, Sergeant and Mrs. Lightfoot (Gordon Aitken and Shirley Bishop) refuse to listen to her protestations.

A HAPPY EVER AFTER : Sweeney Todd having been unmasked, the characters, victims and otherwise, come together in a finale. Above, Johanna (Anderton) and Ingestre (Doyle) in a pas de deux. *Below, Sergeant and Mrs. Lightfoot and the comic policemen get going in a galop and a can-can.*

with the story of the ballet, it somehow managed to convey the dust, heat, gaiety-so-close-to-tragedy which is so much a part of Spain, and also of Sierra's tale of a miller and his wife. During Falla's musical introduction and with this curtain before them, the audience was gradually transported into the mood of Iberia. Without this curtain, as happens with every production today, I feel that the work has lost something vital to it.

The pointless use of a drop curtain is the one which, in probably a highly decorative way, merely gives the name of the ballet. This is virtually an unnecessary extravagance.

I don't feel that what Alix Stone did for *Sweeney Todd* was in any way an extravagance as it immediately put the audience in a good humour and in the right kind of receptive mood for what might appear to be rather repulsive antics of the barber whose victims were minced up into succulent meat pies.

The main setting of Fleet Street, still in the same aubergine colour and still with more ingenious montage, is as tricksy as a Victorian greetings card. The two outside walls of the barber's shop fold back so that we can see all the dastardly deeds that are committed inside. Likewise the house of Sergeant Lightfoot, which opens into a typical lower middle-class parlour of the period — on the painted sofa, over-padded and studded, sits a painted cat which is chucked under the chin by the Sergeant's daughter, Johanna, as she pretends to sit down. This was a witty way of bringing the action into the setting. Although the set is covered with amusing details and hysterical slogans they never really obtrude, and this may have been due to William Bundy's excellent lighting, which gave the whole ballet the feeling of a daguerreotype.

The costumes were equally good because they were never fantasies. Although they have been designed with a decided sense of humour they are equally costumes which people of the period could have worn without causing comment. This is just as they should be because farce — or melodrama — is never funny unless it is possible to relate the characters to ordinary modes of behaviour. There was one particularly delicious confection which Johanna wore for the finale — all in yellow and straight out of the *Floradora* sextet. This was Alix Stone's first ballet, though she has been responsible for some operas at Sadler's Wells — I very much hope that we shall see a lot more of her. **Peter Williams.**

PERFORMANCE DETAILS

Running Time

29 minutes.

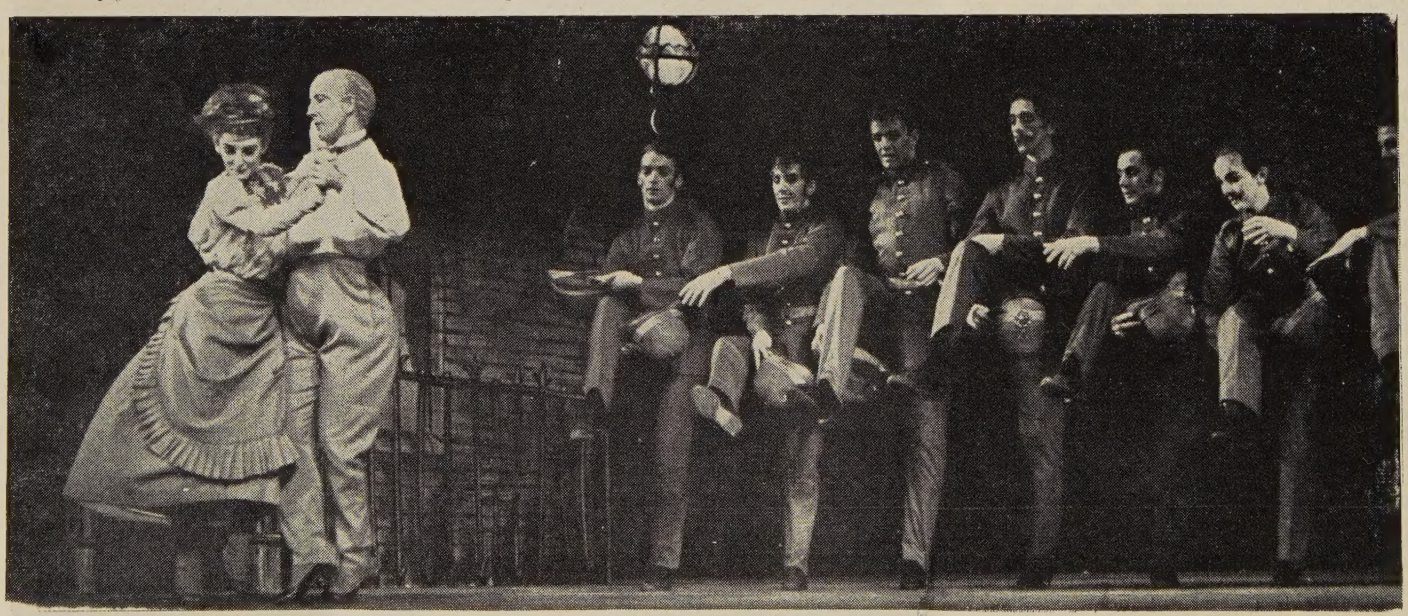
Audience Reaction

12 curtain calls on first night, warm applause.

Press Reaction

(6 stars—Rave ; 5 stars—enthusiastic ; 4 stars—favourable ; 3 stars—lukewarm ; 2 stars—unfavourable ; 1 star—pan.)

Daily Express *; *Daily Mail* **** ; *Daily Telegraph* ** ; *Evening News* ***** ; *Evening Standard* **** ; *Financial Times* ** ; *Guardian* ***** ; *News Chronicle* ***** ; *Observer* **** ; *Sunday Times* **** ; *The Times* ****.



LES SYLPHIDES: *Yvette Chauviré, Peter Van Dijk and Madeleine Lafon in Fokine's* Les Sylphides. *Although in the repertory of almost every company in the world, this great Romantic ballet has not been in the repertory of the Paris Opéra, although it was first revived in Western Europe in Paris at the Châtelet Theatre in 1909. This new production was mounted to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the ballet's first performance in France.* *Photo : Lido.*

Revivals and Creations for the Paris Opéra

On December 16, 1959, the Paris Opéra gave a performance of three works new to the repertory — revivals of Fokine's Les Sylphides **and Anton Dolin's** The Pas de Quatre **and the creation of a new work by George Skibine.**

Les Sylphides

Revived at the Paris Opéra to commemorate the 50th anniversary of its first performance in France.

YVETTE CHAUVIRE
MADELEINE LAFON
CLAUDE BESSY
PETER VAN DIJK

CREATED for a charity performance by the young Fokine, under the title of *Chopiniana,* this ballet which so enchanted Diaghilev, who rechristened it *Les Sylphides,* received a triumphant reception at the Théâtre du Chatelet on June 2, 1909. Since then, this romantic work has not acquired a single wrinkle. It still remains a model, both of composition and for Fokine's skill in evoking a poetic mood. Moreover, it confirms the important rôle he has played in the development of contemporary ballet. As a pupil of Petipa, Fokine knew how to make use of his lessons, and to combine them with his own background of Slav lyricism and an extremely cultivated sense of style.

In its fluid simplicity, which is so in harmony with Chopin's melodies, the work continues to be a difficult test piece for its four soloists and for the *corps de ballet,* who play an equally important rôle. Subtitled "a romantic reverie", it entreats its interpreters to "dream" with the composer. And on this occasion two exceptional dancers showed that they knew how to recapture its poetic atmosphere. Admirably suitable because of their musicality and purity of style, Yvette Chauviré and Peter Van Dijk have genuinely captivated the public. And the unearthly perfection of the *pas de deux,* which brought them together again, allowed each to show the other off to full advantage, and, with perfect harmony and apparent spontaneity, to prove that both have reached the very summit of their art. The charming shades of Pavlova and Nijinsky would not find in them unworthy successors. Despite her technical skill, Madeleine Lafon could no more compete with them than could beautiful Claude Bessy.

The *corps de ballet* have been rigorously kept to Fokine's intentions, and one can only give praise to their impeccable lines and faultless *ensemble* movements, though sometimes one regretted that they conveyed sadness rather than melancholy. Can it be that only the Russians possess the secret of this sense of poetry, or must we put the blame on our traditional teaching for sacrificing artistic culture to glamour? But perhaps such poetry can only be captured by exceptionally gifted dancers?

The Pas de Quatre

Music by Cesare Pugni. Choreography by Anton Dolin. Costumes after A. E. Chalon.

Grahn ..... CHRISTIANE VAUSSARD
Grisi ..... YVETTE CHAUVIRE

THE PAS DE QUATRE : *Yvette Chauviré, Josette Amiel, Lycette Darsonval and Christiane Vaussard in Anton Dolin's revival of his reconstruction of the famous* Pas de Quatre *originally created in 1845 for the four most famous ballerinas of the time.*

Photo : Lido.

Cerrito ..... JOSETTE AMIEL
Taglioni ..... LYCETTE DARSONVAL

THE history of the celebrated *Pas de Quatre* which Benjamin Lumley commissioned from Jules Perrot in 1845 is now too famous to need re-telling. Reproduced by Anton Dolin to Pugni's once forgotten score and designed after Chalon's lithographs, it pays homage to the Romantic period of ballet by reviving some of its most brilliant hours. Both the Festival and De Cuevas companies had popularised it throughout the world before it finally came to be staged at the Paris Opéra. By her wit and delicate fragility, Markova especially has made of the rôle of Taglioni a masterpiece of interpretation. Now she is succeeded by Lycette Darsonval with an entirely different interpretation.

Following Christiane Vaussard as Grahn, Yvette Chauviré tried to resurrect Grisi in a too discreet and, it seemed, melancholy style. In fact, it was Josette Amiel who appeared to be the most satisfactorily cast : she gave an almost spiritual brilliance to Cerrito's solo. Perhaps, in final analysis, we must attribute the stiff formality and lack of humour, from which this pleasant but trivial little work suffers, to the emotion of the gala occasion itself which it has sought to reproduce.

Le Conte Cruel

Vera ..... MARJORIE TALLCHIEF
Roger ..... GEORGE SKIBINE

AUTHOR of the fine scenario for *Piège de lumière,* Philippe Hériat has here borrowed his inspiration from one of Villiers de l'Isle Adam's fantastic stories. Strongly moving in reading, it would seem to make ideal material for ballet. But at first sight of the work itself, this would seem to be very much the reverse.

George Skibine, who has been careful to follow the development of the action, has seen the work as a danced duet. In a preface, he states : "I admit to have experienced a certain uneasiness in trying to present only two dancers on the stage of the Opéra". In this case, unfortunately, his presentiment has been only too well justified.

The curtain rises on a room draped in red, furnished with crimson bed, black piano, and clock (the three main accessories of the theatre !). The Count, Roger d'Athol, enters carrying the Countess Vera clad in her wedding gown. A *pas de deux,* rich in *attitude* turns, unites them : then after a brief passage behind the scenes, the woman reappears in a night-robe, with her hair arranged like so many black serpents, to dance passionately while the Count plays the piano. Exhausted by the violence of his desires, she eventually falls dead in his arms. After a macabre *pas de deux,* the curtain falls to rise on the widower inconsolable in grief before her tomb which he closes for ever.

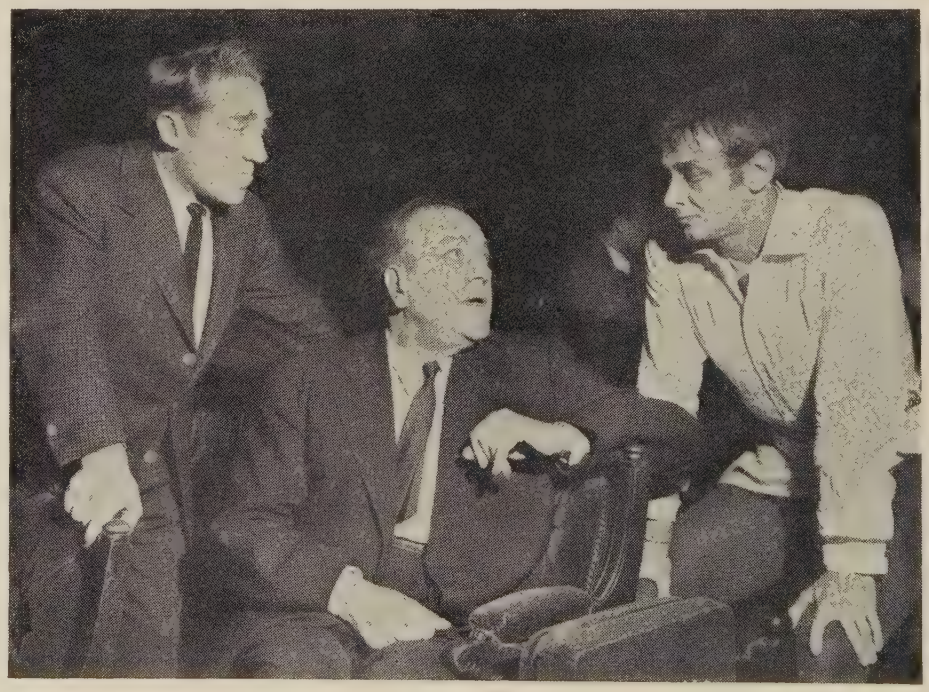
But back in the nuptial chamber, he sees advancing towards him the ghost of his beloved, whom he tries to embrace but cannot hold. Then discovering the key to the tomb which she has brought him, he flings himself into the tomb after her, sealing himself in there for eternity.

This bleak plot hardly lends itself to great development, or to the choreography, which is little more than a rough sketch. The dance does not manage to translate the sensual paroxysms or the flavour of the hallucinatory dream depicted by Villiers de l'Isle Adam. If the feminine rôle features some brilliant passages made to measure for Tallchief, the male rôle appears feebly uninventive, and too often the vast stage remains empty. While Georges Delerue's score is undoubtedly interesting, it lacks theatrical contrast and scarcely suggests itself as being ideal for dance. The décors by Delfau waver between realism (the accessories already cited), the historical for the bride's robe which recalls the 1880's (who will free dancers from long trains ?) and the fantastic in the design of the tomb.

IN addition to these new productions, the Opera is planning several new works for

CREATORS : *Three of the principal creators of* Conte Cruel *in conference — composer Georges Delerue, writer Philippe Hériat (seated) and choreographer George Skibine.*

Photo : Lido.



CONTE CRUEL : *Three studies of Marjorie Tallchief and George Skibine, playing respectively the rôles of Vera and George, in the ballet in two acts and four scenes based by Philippe Hériat on a story of Villiers de l'Isle Adam.*

Photos : Lido.

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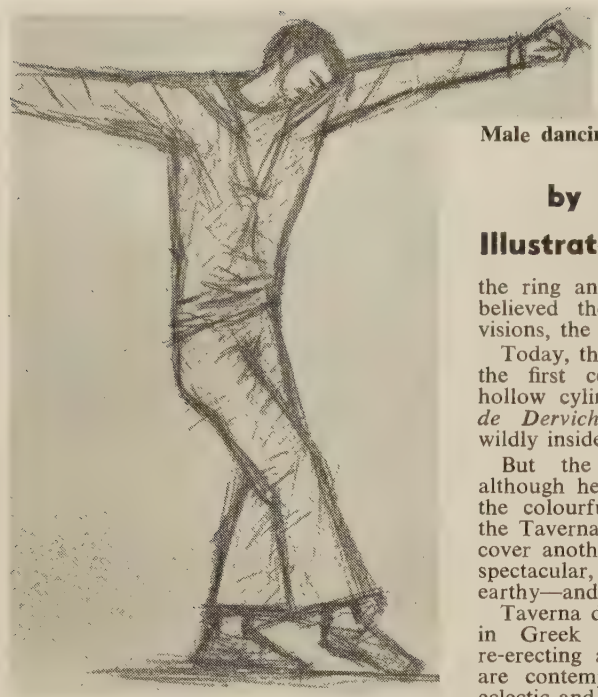
its repertory in the near future. In January, Tatiana Gsovsky will revive her *La Dame eux Camélias* for Yvette Chauviré who originally created the title rôle in Berlin. This will be followed by another Skibine creation called *Printemps*. In March Vladimir Bourmeister will mount his version of *Swan Lake* which achieved such a triumph when his company, the Stanislavsky-Dantchenko company from Moscow. showed it at the Châtelet several years ago. This will be the first time that the Opéra has had the full-length version of the great Tchaikovsky ballet in its repertory and this particular production is generally considered to be the finest to be seen in the world today. In the early Spring, Gene Kelly will be in Paris to mount his first ballet for the Opéra which is to be based on George Gershwin's *Concerto in F.*

Marie-Françoise Christout.

Greek Taverna



Male dancing in taverns is an integral part of life in Greece.

by MARIO AMAYA

Illustrated by JOHN CRAXTON

RICHARD CHANDLER, travelling through Greece in the eighteenth century under the auspices of the Dilettanti Society, paid a visit to the ancient Tower of the Winds, one of the highspots of the time, where he witnessed a performance of whirling Dervishes.

Wrote Mr. Chandler in glib Georgian prose: ". . . the chief Dervish, bursting from the ring in the middle as in a fit of enthusiasm, and letting his hair down, began turning about, his body poised on one of his great toes as on a pivot, without changing place. He was followed by another, who spun a different way, and then by more, four or five in number . . .

"The rapidity with which they whisked around was gradually augmented, and became amazing . . . at length some quitting the ring and fainting, at which time it is believed they are favoured with ecstatic visions, the spectacle ended."

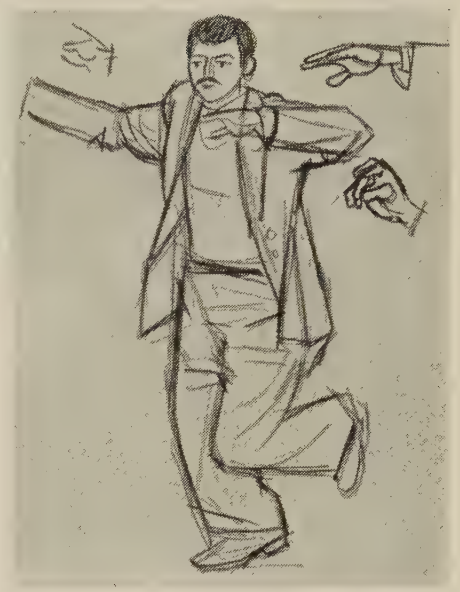
Today, the octagon-shaped tower, built in the first century, B.C., is a crumbling, hollow cylinder and the "*troupe immonde de Derviches hurleurs*" that once spun wildly inside, are gone forever from Athens.

But the modern visitor to Greece, although he may despair at the passing of the colourful Dervishes, has only to visit the Tavernas of Athens and Piraeus to discover another kind of dancing perhaps less spectacular, but certainly more varied and earthy—and a good deal more meaningful.

Taverna dancing holds a peculiar position in Greek life. Intellectuals, intent on re-erecting ancient Athens in all its glory, are contemptuous of what they consider eclectic and foreign; the government, resenting "Turkish" influence, does not encourage such dancing and even goes so far as to ban its music from the radio; the Smart Set find it chic and sophisticated; the tourist thinks of it as just another quaint attraction.

Only the people themselves who dance in the Tavernas seem to enjoy in an unconscious, possessed way, what they do naturally and instinctively. Yet they are not dedicated artists or performers: they are ordinary people such as sailors, workmen, farm labourers, roadworkers, amateurs all, who choose moments of leisure to express themselves in motion.

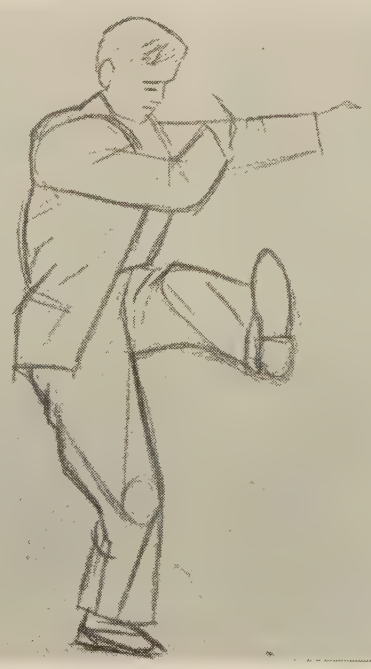
It is not hard to find Taverna dancing — otherwise known as *Zeybekiko*. Any night you might see it, in one of the garishly-lit Athenian saloons that crouch by the hundreds in every side street, or in the filthy Piraeus dives, where bar and restaurant cover up a thriving brothel above.



One such Taverna, with the symbolic name of the Neon Zoe (The New Life) is a favourite haunt, not only because of its cool position facing a leafy park, but for the eccentricity of having a large, flowering tree that grows out of its plaster wall.

The proprietor is flint-like, with a black moustache and a dirty apron. He cooks greasy roasts bound up with intestines in the open window of a smoky kitchen that faces the street. The meal itself, served outside on the pavement, usually consists of Moussaka, fried aubergine, tomato salad and olives, and the inevitable retsina to drink.

FROM CRAXTON'S SKETCHBOOK: The drawings on this page are of workmen Taverna dancing. They are taken from Craxton's Greek sketchbooks dated just before he designed Daphnis and Chloë *for Frederick Ashton at Covent Garden. Some of the movements will be seen as similar to those used in the ballet.*



Dancing

Strange, Arab-sounding music blares from a dusty gramophone speaker on the wall, and western ears strain to make sense of the hypnotic ripples of a metallic-toned Bouzouki that envelops the air. The loudness of the canned music falsely implies hospitality: Greeks do not welcome strangers or business as much as they do noise.

Only men are in the Neon Zoe. At one table sit a group of labourers, at another some sailors, and at a third two middle-aged shopkeeper's assistants. The labourers are talking quietly against the din of the music, while they drain glass after glass of resin-flavoured wine.

Without warning, one of them rises from the table and stands for a minute listening to the gramophone. Then, slowly, he begins to move, revolving once or twice, with his elbows raised to shoulder level, his fingers snapping to the rhythm of the music. Palms and forearms bend gently toward his body, his back arches downward toward the ground, his head hangs limply, his eyes are closed.

None of the other people at the tables is concerned with what he is doing, but continue their soft conversation. The young man dancing seems transported — removed from the squalid reality around him — as he turns to his own special steps, sometimes lightly balancing on his work boots, sometimes with knees bent and on one leg. His hand often touches the floor in a wide arc, as if he were caressing the ground beneath him.

A voice comes out of the loudspeaker, wailing and hard, in a flat tremulo: the lyrics are sentimental. "I am alone," the voice complains. "You have left me forever, and I am alone . . ."

Another man gets up from his table, this one older, grey-faced. His knees are bent, his body folded towards the ground, as he begins to move back and forth to the compelling music. To accentuate beats, he slaps his left hand on his right heel as he revolves, first clockwise, then the other way. His body in its shiny serge is contorted, his elbows jut forward, but he is completely relaxed. There is nothing sharp, taut or severe in his movements: everything is loose within the demands of the incomprehensible rhythm.

Two sailors join in and to the same music dance a *Hasapiko* "duet" or "Butcher's Dance". With their arms on each other's shoulders, they move in unison in anti-clockwise circles, their feet stamping methodically. Then they break and one sailor does a virtuoso double kick with his left foot, slapping his heel. He revolves quickly, raises the other foot, kicks once more, revolves on both feet, stamps again, sinks down on one knee and with a lateral swinging movement shifts his weight from his left leg to his right with amazing quickness. The *Hasapiko* is danced by sailors and has strict, strenuously complicated steps that require a teamwork not so much rehearsed as instinctive.

All the men dancing keep their eyes lowered, their heads bowed. There is something haphazard and hazy about their movements but although off beat they never miss a step. They are tipsy on the cheap but potent retsina, and one feels as they move around the room that this dance, while not bacchanalian in flavour, owes a debt to Bacchus. The drunkenness seems essential in capturing the spirit of the movement and the music. It is a matter between the dancer and his god, and we are the accidental onlookers, sitting outside the temple, watching through its portico the strange rites.

THREE DANCERS: Craxton's painting of Taverna dancers, an oil on canvas, which he did in 1954. It was shown at the Leicester Galleries in London and is now in the collection of Lincoln College, Oxford.

The *Zeybekiko* is not a subject for conversation. It is accepted without discussion or attention, it does not need an audience, it does not earn applause. Taverna dancing, unlike the Flamenco of the Albaicin gipsies, is not an exhibition, it is an inhibition, a personal feat for the individual alone — a private ceremony that must compulsively be danced out of the system regardless of who is there or what the surroundings. The Spanish gipsies stamp their way to freedom, their heads flung back proudly, almost arrogantly, their bodies pushing away from the distasteful dirt at their feet. But the dancer of *Zeybekiko* has a humility, is self-restricting, individual and exclusive. He bends toward the ground almost lovingly, not only seeking sustenance but safety as well:

"Dear earth, I do salute thee with my hand,
"Though rebels wound thee with their horses' hoofs:
"As a long-parted mother with her child
"Plays fondly with her tears and smiles,
in meeting:
"So weeping, smiling, greet I thee my earth . . ."

The *Zeybekiko* made its reappearance in Greece as recently as 1922 at the time when a million and a half refugees crowded on to the mainland at the end of the disastrous Turkish War. These Greeks who left homes they had inhabited since the eighth century, B.C., brought with them not only unemployment, slums and sickness, but their native *Zeybekiko* dance of the "Rebetes".

The roots of the *Zeybekiko* are difficult to trace. Older than Byzantium's frescoes of tough Pantocrators, its music is said to have a close resemblance to that of Constantinople. But *Zeybekiko* goes back to a time before the stern Saviour—to Thrace, in the north, where some say that Orpheus used the same rhythms to enchant the beasts. When the Romans ruled, *Zeybekike* was heard in Phrygia, whose capital of Gordon now lies in Turkey. Is it too far-fetched to imagine that the *Zevbekiko* we see today is the descendant of that ancient rite? One sees it surviving the collapse of the Eastern Empire, remaining hidden in the tribes of the Zeybek — thought to be the original descendants of the Greek-

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Fonteyn on Two Screens

Within a few weeks of each other, it was possible to see Margot Fonteyn in two different media — in the film, The Royal Ballet, **and on television in** The Sleeping Beauty. **They are reviewed by Peter Williams and E. C. Mason respectively.**

IN THE CINEMA

FILMS of ballet have, in the past, always seemed to me to be almost a dead loss from the entertainment point of view of the average audience. Of course they are invaluable for recording purposes, for seeing just *how* great stars of the past danced and for endless other aspects that can have little interest to anyone other than those directly connected with the art of ballet in its many aspects. It has really needed an audience specially educated to understand how much can really be got out of a film — what to look for and what to ignore. Naturally there are exceptions to this and many people mounting dance sequences for American musical films have shown that they have developed a very right approach to presenting the lighter side of dance on the screen. But ballet? well, up until recently it would come pretty low on any Gallup poll as to the most popular subjects to be shown on screens in picture houses.

I began to feel a change to this generally held notion with Dr. Paul Czinner's film of *The Bolshoi Ballet.* It was far from ideal, and Dr. Czinner would be the first to admit this, but it was quite a stride in the right direction and, more than anything else, it was good box-office. All over the world people packed-in to see it, with the result that in every part of the globe the word "Bolshoi" has become synonymous to "ballet", that is to those who do not speak Russian.

So successful was it that Czinner then decided to turn his attentions to our home products, and everything to do with the making of the film, *The Royal Ballet,* has been dealt with fairly exhaustively in a previous number of *Dance and Dancers.* To these jaded old eyes the film now having its world première at the Columbia Theatre, in London, is mighty impressive.

Czinner has made no attempt to be consciously clever and "artistical", with the result that it amounts to a good piece of straight recording of an actual performance upon a stage of three ballets — *Swan Lake (adage, valse, pas de quatre* and *coda* from Act 2), *The Firebird* (almost complete except for the Princesses playing with the golden apples and some of the music leading into the final coronation scene) and *Ondine* (complete except for about a quarter of an hour). What is more, there are none of those guillotined figures lacking hands, arms or tops of heads which are frequently so infuriating in ballet films. Close-ups are cut to a minimum, but when used are far more telling, as far as narrative is concerned, than such scenes ever seem to be in a theatre as large as Covent Garden. In fact the dance and its pattern is revealed in all its true beauty and, miraculously, there seems to be more contact with the audience than is usually felt in dance on the screen.

There are of course a number of faults. For instance, camera distortion, usually so useful for making small distances look immense, has acted in reverse in the case of the *Swan Lake* excerpt, which looks as though it is taking place on a stage about the size of the Mercury Theatre. The glow of Goncharova's designs for *The Firebird* has been decidedly dimmed and there is an unfortunate sudden tone-change in the coronation scene. The main fault, as far as the Royal Ballet is concerned, is that apart from Michael Somes, who actually dances very little, Alexander Grant as Tirrenio, and the *divertissement* in the last act of *Ondine,* the average person seeing this film will get the impression that there is hardly any male dancing in the Royal Ballet. This can doubtless be rectified if and when Dr. Czinner embarks on more films from the company's repertory.

The salient feature of the film is that it records for all time the great art of Margot Fonteyn. Not actually that she shows up so well in *Swan Lake,* in which she gave a beautiful exhibition of pure classicism, showing her immaculate line and musical

SWAN LAKE: *A moment towards the end of the second act excerpt from* Swan Lake *in* The Royal Ballet *film. Michael Somes, left, with Margot Fonteyn being held aloft by Bryan Ashbridge.*

THE FIREBIRD : *The three pictures on this page are taken from the second ballet to be shown in* The Royal Ballet *film. Above, Margot Fonteyn and Michael Somes are seen in the* pas de deux *which comes at the beginning of Fokine's ballet. Below, the Firebird (Fonteyn) puts the creatures and victims of the evil Köstchei to sleep so that Ivan Tsarevitch can steal the egg which contains Köstchei's life. The ballet is shown almost in its entirety in the film.* *Photos : Houston Rogers.*

sensitivity, but which seems to be devoid of deeper feeling as a conception of Odette or of the generosity of movement which the Russians invariably embellish a rôle which is, after all, their national heritage.

In many ways Fonteyn invests the Firebird rôle, in the performance of Fokine's work which follows, with many of the qualities we look for in the perfect interpretation of Odette. Her interpretation of the fabulous bird, inspired by its creator Tamara Karsavina, is masterly — darting, fearful, melting and imperious in turn. Where her performance gains in the film is that it is possible to see her eyes, which reflect every situation and emotion. Splendid as all this is, it is the final work, *Ondine,* which really reveals Fonteyn the ballerina *assoluta* and supreme interpretative artist.

Her vision of the water sprite with mortal leanings is etched in with the simplicity and surety of a Picasso pen stroke and which the film clarifies even more than in a theatre performance. How beautiful is the moment when Ondine first encounters her own shadow ! She playfully reaches out to the silhouette of her arm and is puzzled by the fact that it moves also. How good to see in such detail the moment when she discovers Palemon's beating heart and also the many changes of emotion during the second act when she finds herself at sea with her husband and his previous fiancée — within her rages a battle between the mortal and the immortal. But all through it is possible to see how Fonteyn has reached her supremacy because of her complete subjugation to the dictates of a rôle. At no moment does she appear to live outside the character.

Michael Somes, as her cavalier in all three works, emerges as a screen personality subtly conveying the different dispositions of the three different noblemen who could, by an unseeing artist, have been all played in more or less the same way. Both Fonteyn and Somes receive magnificent support from the company and

particularly from Franklin White, as Köstchei in *The Firebird,* and Alexander Grant, as Tirrenio in *Ondine.*

Unquestionably it is *Ondine* that makes the film what it is, and I thought that Lila de Nobili's designs were far more effective than on the stage and somehow her limited palette proved ideal for the cinema. The film colour appeared to bring out a new richness.

I hope that *The Royal Ballet* will have the popular success it deserves and that schools of this and future generations will be taken to see it time and time again to study the infinite truth of Fonteyn's art and the genius of both Fokine's and Ashton's choreography. What a pity that these marvels had to be disclosed through such grubby-looking Covent Garden front curtains !

P. W.

ON TELEVISION

The Sleeping Beauty

Given on BBC Television on December 20. Choreography after Petipa, with some new choreography by Peter Wright. Designer, Guy Sheppard. Costumes, Jane Scrase Dickins. Music conducted by John Lanchbery and recorded by the Royal Opera House Orchestra. Adapted and produced by Margaret Dale.

Princess Aurora ... MARGOT FONTEYN
Prince Florimund ..... MICHAEL SOMES
The Lilac Fairy ..... LUCETTE ALDOUS
Carabosse ..... YVONNE CARTIER
The King ..... ALFRED RODRIGUES
The Queen ..... FELICITY GRAY
Cattalabutte ..... CLAUDE NEWMAN
The Fairies ..... ANTOINETTE SIBLEY, AUDREY FARRISS, JUNE LESLEY, PRUDENCE RODNEY, JUDITH SINCLAIR.
The Princes ... PETER WRIGHT, JOHN CHESWORTH, BOB STEVENSON, JELKO YURESHA
The Countess ..... GRETA HAMBY
The Blue Birds ... ANTOINETTE SIBLEY, BRIAN SHAW
Puss in Boots ..... KEITH BECKETT
The White Cat ..... AUDREY FARRISS
Florestan pas de trois ..... PRUDENCE RODNEY, JELKO YURESHA, JUDITH SINCLAIR
The Three Ivans ... DEREK WESTLAKE, TERRY GILBERT, ROBERT HARVEY
And Full Company

THIS elaborate production really invites judgment on two levels. On the first it commands respect as a better than average television ballet — better, that is, than the preceding Christmas *Nutcracker,* but below the standard of the Nerina/Fadeyechev *Giselle.* On the other, it emerges as a somewhat unsatisfactory attempt to capture in compressed form on television the essence and atmosphere of a rather unwieldy theatre work.

One of the highlights of Margaret Dale's production was the smoothness with which various filmed passages were matched into

ONDINE : *The last half of the film is given over to Ashton's* Ondine, *which is shown complete apart from about fifteen minutes. Above, Palemon (Somes) first encounters Ondine (Fonteyn). Below they are seen in the love* pas de deux *in Act I, scene 2. On the opposite page at the top, Ondine (Fonteyn) is seen mourning Palemon (Somes), who has just died as the result of kissing her. A moment at the end of the ballet and also of the film. Photos : Houston Rogers and Norman Gryspeerdt.*

live action shots. Indeed, the pictorial quality of some of the filmed episodes was so attractive that they left me with what will probably be considered a reactionary conviction by the authorities at Lime Grove — that as first-class ballet is long past praying for, it should from now on be filmed and not televised.

Condensed to 90 minutes, what to toss out must have been the greatest problem. I, however, would have preferred the *grand pas de deux* variations retained at the expense of further cuts in the Prologue, which creaked along nervously as though the technicians couldn't wait for Fonteyn's entrance. It looked as though we were in for a programme of bits and pieces, with opportunities for acting as limited as they are in this work. In fact, were it not for the ability of Yvonne Cartier (Carabosse) and Lucette Aldous (The Lilac Fairy) to pull it together, and thus keep our spirits up, whenever they appeared, it could have taken on the structure of a posh revue of fairy variations, with Claude Newman as its jovial, fuddy-duddy compère.

Gone were the Knitting Women. Though I'm never greatly captivated by them at Covent Garden, they would have made the point better than the gallant montage improvisation (a scene of wartime massacre !) of dozens of spindles floating about and biting the dust. But here one's laughter was cut short by the dramatic caption "19 Years Later".

Fonteyn, as this 19-year-old Princess, gave what must be regarded as her best television performance to date, although it lacked immediacy and the excitement of her stage interpretation. And "immediacy" is what television is always supposed to give! The rôle seemed more passive than usual and proved a difficult one to sustain and develop for such intimate viewing, probably because of its late entrance and lack of continuity regarding the action.

Many of the effects came over magnificently. I liked the dramatic action effect of an overhead shot of figures running in panic through the darkened ballroom, and the idea of Carabosse's gift of the spindle to Aurora being concealed in a posy of flowers. The "garlands" came over well, with a nice note of informality achieved, this waltz *ensemble* being occasionally broken up or framed by onlookers, with a couple strolling in front of the dancers. The double image of the vision of Aurora asleep and the scene of the boat swirling away in the mist looked very pretty, and I also approved of the idea of the black page scurrying through the castle to wake the cobweb-bedecked courtiers.

Yvonne Cartier, looking like something out of a Beckett dustbin, did wonders with Carabosse, boiling away within herself, gnashing her teeth and cackling away with fierce conviction. Lucette Aldous balanced and turned lightly and looked very sure of herself : her dancing was one of the production's major highlights. Theoretically, she should have been miscast in this sweeping adagio rôle, but, such are the mysteries of television, the visual contrast of having a small dancer in the rôle made her seem ideal. Somes, invariably in profile, and perhaps a little stiff at first, also gave his best television performance so far. In the Vision Scene, his Prince was a melancholy Hamlet-type : after that more conventional.

Rodrigues was too light-weight for the King, while Felicity Gray managed to make the Queen both maternal and regal. Prudence Rodney and Judith Sinclair made the most of their Fairy variations, and Brian Shaw and Antoinette Sibley gave good impersonations of their Covent Garden

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THE BEAUTY SLEEPS : What is Lucette Aldous, as the Lilac Fairy, leaning over in the picture on the left? The answer is in the picture on the right where Michael Somes, as Prince Florimund, leans over the sleeping Princess Aurora (Fonteyn) just before awakening her. Two moments in Margaret Dale's TV production of The Sleeping Beauty *given on December 20. Photos : BBC.*

The Metropolitan Ballet

by JOHN PERCIVAL

For the first in a series, in which we shall consider dancers, companies and incidents of the past — or before the advent of Dance and Dancers **— we have chosen the Metropolitan Ballet. This company, which finished just as** Dance and Dancers **was starting, played an important part in British ballet and in forming many of today's leading artists.**

FANCIULLA DELLE ROSE : *Svetlana Beriosova as the Lady in Frank Staff's ballet. This was one of Beriosova's earliest created rôles.*

IT is just over ten years since Metropolitan Ballet gave its last performance. It was never a world-famous company but it achieved, and deserved, a decent reputation among people who follow the dance. Its repertory included one creation which, if the number of revivals by leading companies is any criterion, must be reckoned among the more successful of post-war ballets. International stars appeared with the company during the three years it toured Britain and Europe ; more important, it helped to develop in their early days many young dancers who have since won fame.

At one time it looked as if the company, unsubsidised and existing from hand to mouth, stood a chance of establishing itself as an important force in British ballet in competition with Sadler's Wells Ballet. Now it is all just a distant memory, yet the company had a spirit about it which evoked so warm a response from its dancers and its audiences that it is still thought of with affection.

Metropolitan Ballet was founded in January 1947 by amalgamating the remnants of two small companies. Neither of these was particularly distinguished. One was Letty Littlewood's Anglo-Russian Ballet, successor to a wartime group sponsored by ENSA (the organisation for entertaining people on national service) ; the other was Leon Hepner's Fortune Ballet, which had been formed, also under the auspices of ENSA, to play to British troops on the continent.

To strengthen the nucleus thus provided, some additional dancers were engaged. These included two promising young soloists, Sonia Arova from Ballet Rambert and Henry Danton from Sadler's Wells Ballet. From Paris came Colette Marchand and Serge Perrault to be the company's first stars and Victor Gsovsky to be ballet-master.

The initial repertory was pretty poor. Although Fortune Ballet had included two works by Andrée Howard in its repertory, the only ballets taken over by Metropolitan from the companies it incorporated were three by Letty Littlewood which vied with each other in banality. At this distance in time I cannot really remember whether I felt most embarrassed watching the dull allegory of *The Marchaund's Tale* (after Chaucer !), the heavy-handed Victorian humour of *The Picnic* or the routine flirtatiousness of *Caprice Viennois* ("Anatol arrives late at the ball," ran the programme note . . . "With whom shall he dance ? He decides to dance with them all.").

There were workmanlike revivals, by Gsovsky, of *Swan Lake* Act 2 and *Les Sylphides,* and rather less satisfactory versions of the *Bluebird* and *Aurora pas de deux.* Lifar's *Romeo and Juliet* was mounted for Marchand and Perrault. In addition, Gsovsky created two new works for the company which, although no masterpieces, introduced some much-needed liveliness into the repertory.

His *Pygmalion* was presumably a reworking of one of Howard's ballets for Fortune Ballet, since it bore the same title and used the same music and same designer. It was a comedy, set in a nineteenth-century Parisian studio ; the humour was broad, but the ballet was at least bright and cheerful. *Dances of Galanta,* to Kodaly's music, was a *divertissement* with some colouring of folk dance and hints of drama here and there. For both works, Gsovsky's skill as a teacher produced performances which made the most of their limited merits.

The company's promoters were fortunate enough somehow to attract the attention of the editor of *Ballet,* who included in his magazine a moderately favourable notice of their first week's programmes at Eastbourne. This was illustrated by some "studies of the choreography of *Dances of Galanta*" which, although scarcely more than a set of jolly scribbly doodles, contrived by an association of ideas to give the impression that this choreography must be worth studying. Thus from the beginning Metropolitan had some kind of cachet to recommend it to ballet-goers.

In fact, Metropolitan Ballet in its earliest days was not much better or worse than many other companies which sprang up during the wartime and post-war boom. Nothing at the company's formation gave promise of any real contribution to British ballet, but from these inauspicious beginnings the company developed rapidly, largely because of the changes in its personnel and direction during the following months.

The French contingent fairly soon returned to Paris, but new talent was recruited from all quarters. Two promising young male dancers were given leave of absence from the Royal Danish Ballet to appear with Metropolitan : they were Paul Gnatt (who had previously danced here with Les Ballets des Champs-Elysées) and Erik Bruhn, still in his 'teens. Their contrasted merits, Gnatt's virile strength and Bruhn's fluent elegance, at once gave distinction to the male rôles. Nicholas Beriosoff, formerly of Ballet Russe companies, came as *regisseur* and brought with him his daughter Svetlana, then just 15 years old. New British recruits included two experienced, although still young artists of versatile talent and strong personality, Celia Franca as dancer and ballet mistress, and Frank Staff first as choreographer and later as dancer. George Kirsta became artistic director for a time. John Lanchbery was engaged as musical director and a young American choreographer, John Taras, was commissioned to mount a ballet which proved to be both his and Metropolitan's first big success.

All this happened, of course, over a period, not all at once. I know that I was by no means the only person who, during those months of slow development, seized every chance to see the company when its travels, during a protracted provincial tour, brought it near London ; each time it proved markedly better than before. By the spring of 1948, not much more than a year after its formation, Metropolitan Ballet was transformed from just another third-rate touring group into a company of real individuality and promise.

On Wednesday, June 2, 1948, Metropolitan Ballet opened its first West End season, in the unfashionable Scala Theatre off Tottenham Court Road. The first-night programme began with *Les Sylphides,* handicapped by a startlingly inappropriate backcloth but well dressed and well danced. The leading dancers were Beriosova and Bruhn — both immature, but both already blessed with the beautiful flowing movement, the musical sense, the elegance and the poetry which Fokine's choreography demands.

The company's two best creations to date came next on the programme. *The Lovers' Gallery,* with story, scenery and costumes by George Kirsta, had an unpromising theme about a couple who meet in an art gallery and get locked in overnight, when the pictures come to life and interfere drastically with their plans. Fortunately the music (Lennox Berkeley's engaging *Divertimento*). Kirsta's elaborate and ingenious setting and Staff's witty, robust and fanciful choreography went a long way to hide the ballet's weakness of conception and construction.

Designs with Strings, the other new work, has since become so well known that it is easy to forget the impact it made at that time. With Balanchine's works of the later 'thirties and the 'forties almost entirely unknown in Europe, the hints of strong emotion breaking through a near-plotless dance were more surprising and more touching than they prove today. Also, the ballet suited the young Beriosova to perfection, and nobody dancing it since has come near to equalling her heartbreaking innocence and charm, her youthful happiness and melancholy. In 1949, Metropolitan were to find themselves dancing *Designs* in one London theatre while the Marquis de Cuevas' company performed it in another. The Marquis was able to put out a strong cast, who danced the ballet beautifully, but they could not begin to compete with Metropolitan in recapturing the original atmosphere of the work.

The final ballet on that opening night in June 1948 was *Prince Igor.* Beriosoff had

mounted this for Metropolitan only a few weeks before, and the company danced it with a fire that matched the stirring characterisation of the warrior chief by Paul Gnatt, all strength and tempestuous vigour. The curtain came down to an ovation.

The season at the Scala also included the première of a new ballet by Staff, *Fanciulla delle Rose,* in which a young girl was tempted by each of the seven deadly sins in turn. Once again Beriosova was given a rôle making excellent use of her grave beauty and childlike capacity for completely innocent abandon. The rest of the cast was exclusively masculine and served to show the strength of the company in male dancers.

Other highlights of the three-week season were a better-than-average revival of *Le Spectre de la Rose* (with Beriosova and Bruhn) and the beautiful dancing of Bruhn in the *Swan Lake pas de trois:* excellent elevation, beats clean and neat, *jetés* perfectly timed, and all blended with a wonderfully flowing grace which more than compensated for a slight lack of *brio.* There were, too, the bravura of Sonia Arova and the quiet, unhurried, unstrained quality of Peggy Sager in classical rôles; the virile authority of Staff; the neat character dancing of Beriosoff and Aart Verstegen; and the promise of two young men, the boisterously ebullient David Adams and the still tentative but steadily improving Eric Hyrst.

These soloists were supported by a *corps de ballet* which was both lively and disciplined. Lanchbery drew from the orchestra playing of a rather higher standard than touring companies often enjoy; he even dared, with success, to introduce some orchestral interludes.

Press reactions were as varied as one would expect, but pretty favourable on the whole. To quote only the magazine, for instance, *The Dancing Times* praised the company's sense of style and thought they should go far; they deserved "every possible support and encouragement". Richard Buckle, in *Ballet,* got the date of the first night wrong but found it "an exciting evening". In *Ballet Today,* P. W. Manchester declared herself glad to see a company "who seem to dance for the joy of dancing", and A. V. Coton in *Dance News* thought that Metropolitan would "probably be the really important English ballet company by the 1950s".

Coton's comment, which represented a strongly-held minority view, deserves some explanation. During this season, Metropolitan Ballet were playing in direct competition with Sadler's Wells Ballet, who had as guest artists Markova and Dolin, back in London after an absence of nearly a decade. Margot Fonteyn was just undergoing that miraculous transformation which changed her from a devoted, adored and marvellously talented dancer into a *prima ballerina assoluta. Scènes de Ballet* was new in the repertory, *Job* had just been revived and Massine was busy rehearsing his creation for the company to Haydn's Clock Symphony.

By any objective standards, Metropolitan would lose in comparison with the Wells. But they were at their strongest where the Wells were weakest, both in the ability of the male dancers and in the use made of them. Also, at a time when there was not much evidence of a strong driving purpose behind the creative policy at Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Ballet showed some signs, however modest, of trying to build a repertory of fresh, distinctive new works.

In these circumstances it was not far-fetched to see in Metropolitan Ballet, given a little time and reasonable luck, the possibility of providing some valuable competition to the Wells — and many of the staunchest admirers of that company must have felt at the time that a little competition would not come amiss. They had come on enormously in two years at Covent Garden, but were still very far removed from the company we know today.

It is interesting, incidentally, that one's natural reaction at the time was to compare Metropolitan with the main Wells company at Covent Garden, rather than with the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet, although the latter was more closely comparable in length of existence and probably in the average age of the dancers. (In size, Metropolitan then fell mid-way between the two Wells companies.)

The Theatre Ballet at that time led a sheltered life, dancing usually only once or twice a week, and was not developing so fast as Metropolitan was forced to do. In the long run, the Theatre Ballet policy paid dividends, but it was not practicable for a private venture.

The greatest weakness in the direction of Metropolitan Ballet was in the standard of its scenery and costumes. The two best-looking ballets in the repertory were *Igor* and *Designs with Strings,* in both of which Peter Williams had solved the problem of effective settings for a touring ballet company by using attractive costumes against extremely simple backcloths, set off by good lighting. There was no English Bérard or Clavé to create for Metropolitan the world of brilliantly inventive décor which their French counterparts enjoyed, but this disadvantage was equally true of the Wells — even when Bérard himself designed *Clock Symphony,* the results were sadly disappointing.

After their season at the Scala Theatre, Metropolitan Ballet appeared for a fortnight at the Royal Opera House in a stage version of *The Pilgrim's Progress.* This production employed an acting cast, the Covent Garden orchestra and opera chorus as well as Metropolitan Ballet, with Sir Malcolm Sargent as musical director. The choreography was by Andrée Howard; the dancers appeared in most of the scenes, but had little to do except in the Delectable Mountains and the Valley of Shadows. What they had to do, they did efficiently and with enthusiasm, but this was not the kind of venture in which the company could ever have hoped to consolidate the artistic success of their Scala season.

In this unlikely way, however, Beriosova and Bruhn, among others, made their Covent Garden début. The opera chorus, incidentally, contained another artist, then

DESIGNS WITH STRINGS: *Paul Gnatt and Beriosova, left, in the* pas de deux *from the first production of John Taras's now famous ballet for six people. Right, Sonia Arova with Delysia Blake, David Adams, Beriosova (back to audience), Eric Hyrst and Peggy Sagar in another movement from the same work.* *Photos: Duncan Melvin.*

PRINCE IGOR : *Paul Gnatt, leaping, as the Polovtsian Chief in Beriosoff's revival of Fokine's ballet.*

unknown, who has since become an international star — the tenor Charles Craig.

Now the company went off on a tour of Scandinavia. Gnatt and Bruhn had to return to Copenhagen, their leave having expired, but Frank Schaufuss joined Metropolitan for the tour, his parts including the *Nutcracker pas de deux,* which was mounted for him and Beriosova. A subsequent further tour of the British provinces was enlivened by a trip to Jersey in March 1949 to open a new theatre. On this occasion the company added to their repertory a production of the middle scene from *Coppélia* and a duet to music by Beethoven created by Schaufuss for Beriosova and Hyrst.

In June 1949, Metropolitan Ballet again played a London season, this time at the Empress Hall, where they took part in a "Festival of Ballet" with Alexandra Danilova, Leonide Massine and Frederic Franklin as guest artists. Alexandre Kalioujny (who had danced with the company on tour) was to have come to London to dance *Prince Igor,* but was unable to do so ; Bruhn and Gnatt, however, rejoined the company for the two weeks' season.

FIRST LONDON SEASON : Some members of the company outside the stage door of the Scala Theatre where Metropolitan Ballet first appeared in Central London. The group includes : Celia Franca, John Lanchbery, David Adams, Delysia Blake, Jacqueline St. Clere, Peter Williams and Sonia Arova.

The principal attraction was a revival of *Le Beau Danube* with the three stars in the leading rôles. There were good supporting performances from the company, including Beriosova as a delightful First Hand, full of charm, gaiety and ease. Beriosova and Hyrst (by now Metropolitan's leading male dancer) alternated with Danilova and Franklin in the second act of *Swan Lake* and had their own very real merits to set against those of the older and more illustrious dancers. Beriosova, with her inborn beauty of movement, had already great authority for one so young ; Hyrst partnered well and danced his solo with vigour and flourish using the big stage to good advantage.

This season saw the company dancing really well ; three weeks later they opened a three-week season at the Lyric, Hammersmith, looking tired, dispirited and feeble. The inevitable let-down after the stimulus of appearing with international stars may have contributed to this effect ; so may the contrast of the tiny stage after the vast spaces of the Empress Hall. Also, it was now possible to see more clearly the effect of changes in the personnel of the company, which were not, on the whole, for the better.

Apart from Beriosova and Franca (the latter disastrously miscast as Swanilda) the leading dancers were Domini Callaghan, Eric Hyrst, Henry Danton (temporarily rejoined after long absence) and Michel de Lutry.

Callaghan's good line and attractive movement were not backed up by any of the other qualities needed to make a ballerina. Hyrst had developed into a good all-round dancer, but Danton had acquired some finicking affectations which robbed his work of virility, and de Lutry, in spite of a strong technique, had a short, plump physique and a badly placed head which made him ill-suited to classical *pas de deux.* The company was much reduced in numbers (there were now only some 30 dancers compared with about 40 a year before) and was also

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ENGLISH MEASURE : *Dancers in Faith Worth's ballet to various composers'* Variations on an Elizabethan Theme.

No Surprises on Sunday

The sixth performance of Sunday Ballet Club was held at the Lyric Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, on December 13, 1959.

by CLIVE BARNES

Photographed by ROY ROUND

THE Sunday Ballet Club gave its sixth performance at the Lyric Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, on December 13. This was the first production in which all the choreographers had made previous ballets for the club. In reviewing its first performance, I said of the club: "It has the chance to become the centre, or perhaps better, the focus of all progressive dance activity and thought in Britain today." Now, nearly two years and five performances later it must be admitted that the club has not taken that chance — the really progressive British ballets of the past two years have been *Agon, Two Brothers, Hazaña* and *Antigone* all produced by either the Royal Ballet or the Ballet Rambert; the only out-and-out experiments during the same period have been undertaken by the Western Theatre Ballet. During its whole career the Sunday Ballet Club has often dismayed me but never shocked me, irritated me but never made me angry, it hasn't once, and this is important, given me anything to think about. Now I feel like saying, echoing you-know-who: "Run away and play, and don't come back until you can surprise me."

Of course, to the charge of being non-progressive the Club may have a near-perfect counter. It can, with some reason and justice, point out that its primary intention has not been to blaze any choreographic paths, and it has consequently restricted itself to the more modest — and at least on the surface more practical — aim of unearthing fresh choreographic talent. Although so far it seems likely that it has not discovered a *major* choreographer, the club can point with some pride to giving a first opportunity to both Norman Dixon and Clover Roope, as well as providing Meriel Evans with the chance to enlarge her experience. This, on the face of it, is not a bad record, but the immediate need for British ballet is not so much for new choreographers as for new choreo-

VIOLENT RHYTHM : *Norman Dixon being lynched in his own ballet concerning the colour question and for which he used Johnny Mandel's music from the film* I Want To Live.

LOVE DUET : *Vyvyan Lorrayne and Derek Rencher in Meriel Evans'* pas de deux *to music taken from Berlioz* The Trojans.

graphy. At the present moment the market is saturated with choreographers, and even if the Sunday Ballet Club were lucky enough to discover the present-day equivalent of Michel Fokine, that latter-day Fokine might still find it difficult to get work. For the truth of the matter is that most of our present choreographers are underemployed, and while the really outstanding talent could still make its way — after all, no one could really ignore a new Fokine — I cannot personally see any signs of such a talent on the horizon.

I suspect that the choreographic potential of British ballet has been pretty fully explored, and I suggest that the time has come for the Sunday Ballet Club to make the locating of new talent a secondary rather than a primary aim. If the club is to perform a truly valuable office in the future, it must adopt a much more positive attitude towards ballet-making. Its less experienced choreographers need much more initial guidance over the selection of both theme and music. Obviously no one in the club has time, or for that matter, the knowledge, to supervise strict control over a ballet from the cradle to the stage. Nor is the club always in a very strong position when it comes to insisting that it knows better than any of its choreographers. Even the most inexperienced choreographer is presumably a man with a bee in his bonnet, and bees have a habit of not taking kindly to orders. Yet for all this I refuse to believe that the majority of the choreographers so far used could not have been gently and kindly persuaded out of some of their more impracticable notions.

Far too many of the works produced have not only been bad ballets, but they have been predictably bad before the luckless choreographer had even started out on a rehearsal. I am not here asking for the resurrection of Diaghilev ; all I want is someone with a little taste and a gift of the gab who can explain to a talented young man, announcing that he wants to do a narrative ballet to a couple of Berlioz overtures, that he would be wasting his time unless he first finds different music. The Sunday Ballet Club must discover someone — or if they have already found him, must use him — who can tell an impossibility when he sees one, and knows the difference between an idea and a cliché.

Yet while I think a little common-sense would work wonders, it is still apparent that the Sunday Ballet Club needs a leavening of mature talent if it is to set the Thames ablaze. It is possible that the club has approached every established choreographer in the country and bombarded them with requests to contribute to their programme, and everyone has turned them down. If this is so, then it's too bad, for I cannot see the club doing much good without their co-operation, and I personally would be inclined to shut up shop with as much dignity as I could muster. However, the club so clearly has such a lot to offer to the Howards, Gores, Crankos, Rodrigues, MacMillans, Carters, Darrells, Wrights and Morrices of this world, and it has proved itself so successful in surmounting every other purely organisational obstacle, that I feel sure that if it put its heart and soul into it, it could persuade these successful, but surely occasionally somewhat frustrated choreographers, that in its way the Sunday Ballet Club can offer to them more opportunities than Covent Garden has ever dreamed of. All the club needs is a few people as adept at selling ideas as they are at selling tickets. Indeed, if they were as adept as all that they might even get Ashton himself to collaborate ! But I suppose I digress.

ROUND ONE

ENGLISH MEASURE. Choreography : Faith Worth. Music : Berkeley, Oldham, Searle, Walton, Tippett, Britten.
SONGS AND DANCES OF DEATH. Choreography, Décor and Costumes : John Broome. Music : Moussorgsky.

FAITH WORTH'S first work, *The Venus Flower,* for the Sunday Ballet Club was less successful than it might have been, partly because she used a singularly intractable story — Oscar Wilde's *The Nightingale and the Rose.* For her second serious venture into choreography, *English Measure,* which raised the curtain on this sixth programme of the Sunday Ballet Club, she has produced a plotless ballet, forgetting perhaps that this is probably the most difficult of choreographic forms.

Her choice of music fell on *Variations on an Elizabethan Theme,* that musical symposium-cum-party-piece — produced by the Aldeburgh group. Just as the music is a *hommage* to the Elizabethan madrigalists, so presumably Faith Worth intended to utilise certain stylised Elizabethan dance steps in the choreography. But if this was her intention she appears to have lacked the experience to carry it out, and what emerges is a pallid classical ballet very remotely flavoured with an element of

Elizabethan courtliness.

The ballet had little structure or shape, and at times seemed strangely, even wilfully, anti-musical. The dances, often using difficult sequential movement, had insufficient contrast and were unable to build up to a satisfactory climax, either emotional or dynamic.

Young dancers from the Royal Ballet School gave the ballet with fledgling charm but insufficient stagecraft. One young boy dressed in black, Anthony Dowell, struck me as a most promising talent, and there were one or two other dancers whom we will doubtless one day know.

Following this came John Broome's "visual interpretation of Moussorgsky's Song Cycle" *Songs and Dances of Death.* John Broome's choreography lacks nothing so much as technique. I have now seen what in retrospect seem a great number of his ballets, and in none of them has he solved the basic problem of relating a consistent dance style to the music. Always he appears to produce the same plastic poses apparently derived from the mist-laden echoes of 1930 Central European dance. This is the sort of misunderstanding that has made "modern dance" a dirty phrase among so many ballet circles in London.

As a stage producer Broome has admittedly considerable merits — and these can sometimes obscure the old-fashioned dreariness of his subject matter and his portentous, yet vacuous, dance vocabulary. Like John Webster, Broome is much obsessed with death, and I suppose that for a young artist there is no great harm in having a few skulls among his night-thoughts. However, they must be a good deal more interestingly expressed than here if we are to take them seriously. At one moment, for example, we had to watch what looked for all the world like a tasteless parody of Jooss's battle-scenes in *The Green Table.* The ballet had been well lit in a self-consciously artistic fashion by Peter Harwood, and the cool dancing of Eileen Cropley stood out from amongst the disorganised fervour.

ROUND TWO

VIOLENT RHYTHM. Choreography: Norman Dixon. Music: Johnny Mandel. Settings: Stanley Houghton.

NORMAN DIXON'S new ballet *Violent Rhythm* formed the centre-piece of the programme, and I had anticipated it keenly, perhaps too keenly. In both of his previous ballets for the Club, Dixon has shown himself to be an interesting choreographer with something worth saying. This third ballet had the disadvantage of a most unfortunate pre-performance history. Four Royal Ballet dancers who had been allotted the leading rôles found at the last moment that their Covent Garden schedule did not give them sufficient time to rehearse Dixon's choreography, and a new cast had to be assembled at, I understand, a week's notice. This misfortune probably explained why Dixon's work was less assured than its two predecessors. Despite this the subject was, I think, far too commonplace ever to have made a particularly arresting ballet.

Its "contemporary" theme of a girl who falls in love with a coloured boy and is inadvertently stabbed to death by her brother during a brawl over him, proved too slick and predictable to possess much drama. It was a kind of *East End Story* using, in Alan Brien's phrase, the "Spades are always Trumps" theme that has become a modern cliché in our drama.

Coupled with this poor theme, Dixon also made the disastrous mistake of using film music for his work. The functions of music in these two media are so divergent that I cannot imagine film background music ever proving suitable in the dance theatre.

The actual choreography lacked compulsion, especially in the extremely badly assimilated realisation of *palais de danse* jive, which proved more tepid than cool. An extremely good performance came from that excellent dancer Terry Gilbert as a trouble-making layabout, and Prudence Rodney did well as the young girl. Dixon himself was a little less impressive than usual as the coloured boy, although this can be explained by his having to take over the part from Gary Burne at short notice. Both Keith Beckett and Gillian Martlew discharged their rôles capably.

ROUND THREE

LOVE DUET. Choreography: Meriel Evans. Music: Berlioz. Costumes: Alix Stone.

THE BLESSED. Choreography and Costumes: Ronald Yerrell. Music: Berlioz. Scenery: Geoffrey Guy.

THIS sixth programme ended with some sort of minor Berlioz festival, starting off with Meriel Evans's *pas de deux Love Duet* set to the love duet from *Les Troyens.* While nothing will convince me that this should have been done in the first place, I felt it was pretty well done in the second place. It would be difficult to think of a lily less in need of gilding than this music, and for all the tact and taste of Meriel Evans's choreography, it still seemed superfluous.

On the other hand it was an interesting *pas de deux* carried out with great sensitivity. The choreography had a most wonderful fluency to it with the girl positively convoluting around her partner in a series of the most ingenious lifts, the whole thing having eloquence and finely-wrought plastic proportions. This was original choreography, not only in its use of the male as an earthbound yet flowing supporter, but also in its clear evocation of Berlioz's mysterious sensuality.

Both Vyvyan Lorrayne and Derek Rencher were superb as the lovers, Lorrayne's *arabesques* being especially commendable. Alix Stone — clearly designer of the month! — provided sumptuous costumes in white and gold.

Ronald Yerrell's *The Blessed* is based on a short story, the name and author of which I should remember but don't. The story is of a prostitute who is miraculously given a silver sprig by a statue of the Madonna. The mob, thinking she has stolen the sprig, put her to death, whereupon she is vindicated by a sign from Heaven. The finely dramatic story, perfect for ballet, has been used by Yerrell with expert theatricality. Unfortunately his choice of music (Berlioz's overtures *Carnaval Romain* and *Benvenuto Cellini,* played one after the other) proved so wayward that the choreography became ludicrous. Tudor's *La Gloire* should have proved for all time that overtures do not make a suitable dance form for ballet, and Yerrell's choreography spent its entire time chasing but never catching its own tale.

Yerrell's own costumes were far too suggestive of a revue in their lush fripperies, and the ballet was not very notably performed by the dancers from *My Fair Lady.* This is an excellent theme and from his work with the Ballet Workshop/Rambert, I should say Yerrell has the talent to make something worthwhile of it. For the next programme it might be an idea to invite him to get a different score (little-known Bach perhaps) and produce a complete reworking of the ballet.

THE BLESSED: *Leonie Leamy and two monks in a scene from Ronald Yerrell's ballet to two Berlioz overtures.*

DIAGHILEV COMMEMORATED: In an interval during the recent gala at Monte Carlo Theatre to commemorate Diaghilev, who once made his headquarters there, are Serge Lifar, Dame Margot Fonteyn, Michael Somes, Princess Grace and Prince Rainer II of Monaco and Max Bozzoni. Photo: Oggero.

curtain up!

New Year in the Garden

THE last chimes of 12 midnight had hardly died away on December 31 when two events, or possibly in the circumstances they could be called three events, were announced which provided reason for rejoicing around the Bow Street area. The first was the announcement that the General Administrator of the Opera House had been appointed a K.B.E. in the New Year's Honours list. Sir David Webster, as he now is, has done monumental work in making ballet and opera pay, or as much as it is ever likely to, at Covent Garden. Apart from a month of holiday each year, the season continues throughout the other eleven months. This is an event which was unheard of in pre-war days. Not only that but Sir David was personally instrumental in making the Bolshoi visit possible, and he has also been largely responsible for making the old vegetable market-surrounded opera house one of the most respected in the world.

Just previous to this announcement and before the old year had quite faded out, Royal Ballet soloist Maryon Lane gave birth to twin girls at Queen Charlotte's Hospital. She and her husband David Blair, a male star of the Royal Ballet, had expected twins — but not quite so quickly. All four Blairs are reported to be doing splendidly and I hear that Dame Ninette de Valois is already planning that the Blair twins shall appear in a future production of *Swan Lake* — one as Odette and the other as Odile. Our readers will, I know, wish to join me in sending congratulations to all these people.

The Kiss again

ABOUT twenty-five years ago, November 26, 1935, to be exact, Frederick Ashton mounted Stravinsky's *Le Baiser de la Fée* for the Sadler's Wells Ballet with Pearl Argyle as the Fairy, Harold Turner as the Bridegroom and Margot Fonteyn, in her first created rôle, as the Bride. In due time it was dropped from the repertory and there have always been rumours that Ashton would revive it. However, nothing came of this and it began to look as though this magnificent score would not be heard again in any British repertory. It has survived, however, in the repertories of a number of foreign companies choreographed by various choreographers — the most notable being by George Balanchine for the Paris Opéra and for his own New York City Ballet.

Now I hear that the ballet is to return to the Royal Ballet's repertory in April. For the Covent Garden production, Kenneth MacMillan is doing the choreography and Kenneth Rowell the scenery and costumes. The principal rôles will be played by Svetlana Beriosova as the Fairy, Lynn Seymour as the Bride, and Donald MacLeary as the Bridegroom.

Unhappy tour prelude

OH dear, what a lot of fuss the Royal Ballet has created for itself by the public announcement that they were not (and, let's face facts, could not) including Johaar Mosaval in the company which will tour his native South Africa. Questions in the House of Commons, a tongue-in-cheek suggestion (or was it serious?) by one M.P. that the Royal Charter should be revoked, and lots of hard feelings all round.

The most shameful remark of all was that attributed to a spokesman from South Africa House that Mosaval's inclusion was not even considered because of the repertory to be taken. Really, that sort of remark will fool nobody who knows both the repertory and the rôles which Mosaval dances.

I personally think the decision to go to South Africa at the present time was wrong. But I am certain it was an enormous

MONTE CARLO RETURN: More of the artists who appeared in Monte Carlo for the Diaghilev Gala. Left to right: Irene Shorik, Youly Algaroff, Jacques Combes (Ballet Master from Strasburg), Max Bozzoni, Tessa Beaumont, Prince Pierre of Monaco, Serge Lifar, Yvette Chauviré, Michel Renault and Liane Daydé. Photo: Oggero.

blunder, having realised that obviously Mosaval could not go to South Africa, that he was left in the touring section of the Royal Ballet for so long and thus giving every scope for criticism. Had he been dancing with the Covent Garden company when the tour was announced, nobody could have said a word, at least not on that particular point. Is everyone at Covent Garden so busy planning future policy for years ahead that they can't foresee something that's going to happen only a month or two ahead?

Nationality for curtain slippers

IT is some time since we in England heard any news of Nora Kovach and Istvan Rabovsky. These two Hungarian dancers once caused quite a stir, in one way and another, when they slipped through the Iron Curtain into the welcoming arms of the U.S. Army and, if we are to believe an American film about their escape, into quite a crowd of cameramen.

For some years they have been dancing in the States — in night clubs as well as theatres — and now I hear that they have become American citizens. We all wish them well in their new home, but I wonder what has happened to that wonderful style which Mrs. Rabovsky at least learnt in Moscow before her escape? Perhaps she regards that now as un-American!

Early birds

FOR years we have carried on about the fact that most European festivals don't make their plans until well after most of us have made our own plans for summer holidays. Both Copenhagen and Nervi have listened to our complaints and there should be no excuse for anyone not visiting both these festivals in 1960 if they have the money and the inclination so to do — both festival centres had made their plans before 1959 was out. The Royal Danish Ballet and Music Festival will take place in Copenhagen from May 17 to 31. There will also be a Ballet Exhibition in the Copenhagen Town Hall at the same time, when over 1,000 items will be shown in addition to displays, lectures and demonstrations of the technique of the Royal Danish Ballet School.

As I told you last month, Massine is Artistic Director of this year's Nervi Festival in Genoa, which will take place from July 8 to 28. The opening programme will consist of *Decameron*. choreographed by Massine on stories by Boccaccio. Then in the next programme there will be a full-evening work based on Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. Other programmes include shorter works such as Fokine's *Les Sylphides* and *Scheherazade* Massine's *Cimarosiana, Le Beau Danube, Choreartium, Laudes Evangelii* and another creation, based on an Anouilh play, called *Bal des Voleurs*.

Soviet exchange

WITHIN the next two years I hear there is to be a lively exchange of culture between Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. In addition to orchestras and theatre companies, it seems that we are to have a number of dance spectacles, starting off with about thirty dancers, led by Maya Plisetskaya, from the Bolshoi, who are to tour the English provinces in May. At the moment no other names are announced. In February of 1961, 130 members of the Kirov Theatre from Leningrad are to visit London. The Kirov Theatre is what in the past was always referred to as the Maryinsky Theatre and was the cradle of Russian ballet and most of the great Russian dancers up to the revolution. In May of next year the Ukrainian Dance Ensemble will appear at the Royal Albert Hall.

At the moment there is no news of any British ballet company being sent in exchange for all this, though there is a possibility certain British ballerinas may appear at the Bolshoi as guest artists. They have been invited, but it is just a question of finding time when they can possibly go.

Award for Graham

THE annual award given each year by the firm of Capezio in New York is one of the most sought-after awards among the many to be handed out in the United States. The most distinguished names in the world of dance have been the previous recipients. This year's award goes, and very deservedly, to Martha Graham, who was cited as "a distinguished choreographer, innovator, who never compromised in her pursuit of dance exploration". With the presentation goes a cash award of $1,000, which I hear that Miss Graham has already put towards commissioning a new work.

Scribe Markova

IT is quite time that Markova got down to putting pen to paper because she has a memory like the proverbial elephant — the only thing about her that can in any way be compared with this noble beast. Now I hear that Barrie & Rockliff have commissioned her to write a book on *Giselle*, and it would be hard to imagine anyone more suitable to do so, being as she is one of the great Giselles of this century. In addition to an historical survey of the old ballet she will also write her experiences of performing it for the past 25 years.

Stratfordian Humour

EVERYBODY who knows the Shakespeare Hotel in Stratford-upon-Avon knows also that the rooms and bedrooms are named after Shakespearean plays or characters. The management may have had a twinkle in its eye when it allotted the rooms to various people staying there for the first night of Cranko's *Sweeney Todd* at the Memorial Theatre. For instance, Dame Ninette de Valois was put in "The Forest of Arden", critic A. V. Coton found himself in "King Lear", while your Associate Editor was relegated to "The Tempest". What of your Editor? Well, he preferred to drive back to London through the night and through rain and slush for fear he would find himself in "As You Like It", "Love's Labour Lost" or "Much Ado About Nothing".

happy birthday to...

		February
Sandra Short	Ballet Rambert	
Solange Golovine	De Cuevas International Ballet	24
Doreen Eastlake	The Royal Ballet	25
Lyde Peralta	De Cuevas International Ballet	26
Yvonne Cartier		27
Todd Bolender		27
		March
Jill Bathurst	London's Festival Ballet	1
Eileen Ward	Ballet Rambert Organisation	3
Dorothea Zaymes	The Royal Ballet	4
Earl Kraul	Canadian National Ballet	5
Valerie Marsh	Ballet Rambert	7
Maurice Metliss	The Royal Ballet	8
Leslie White	Teaching in Australia	10
Tamara Karsavina		10
David Drew	The Royal Ballet	12
Ursula Moreton	Royal Ballet Organisation	13
Pirmin Trecu	The Royal Ballet	13
Igor Youskévitch		13
Barry McGrath	London's Festival Ballet	15
Jocelyn Terrell	Canadian National Ballet	16
Lillian Wellein	De Cuevas International Ballet	16
Walter Trevor	In New Zealand	17
Jeanette Cassells	Canadian National Ballet	18
Ray Powell	The Royal Ballet	20
Vladimir Skouratoff	De Cuevas International Ballet	22
Rowena Jackson	In New Zealand	24
Lilian Jarvis	Canadian National Ballet	25

Dancer of Today

Photo : Max Rayner.

BELINDA WRIGHT

BORN in Southport in 1929, and started to dance at the Loveto School of Dance in Southport. Studied at the Rambert School. Made her professional début with the Ballet Rambert in 1945. In 1951 she joined Roland Petit's Ballets de Paris, leaving to join Festival Ballet later in the same year. In 1954 she danced for a season with the De Cuevas Company, but later rejoined Festival Ballet in 1955, leaving a year later to have a baby. She returned to dancing last year, and after a number of guest appearances on the Continent, rejoined Festival Ballet. Creations: (include) (for Rambert) leading rôle in Plaisance; *(for Festival Ballet) Marguerite in* Vision of Marguerite; *Alice in* Alice in Wonderland; Concerto Grosso en Ballet; Harlequinade Pas de Deux; Les Deux Errants. *Rôles: (include) Giselle in* Giselle; *Odette in* Swan Lake *Act 2;* Blue Bird Pas de Deux; *Sugar Plum Fairy in* The Nutcracker; *Swanilda in* Coppélia; Les Sylphides.

ON September 10 last year, at Festival Ballet's Gala Performance to celebrate their 10th birthday, Belinda Wright returned to the company where she first found fame. And the audience left her in no doubt as to the warmth of its feelings towards her.

She is one of those rare things in British ballet, a natural soubrette, and one only has to see her in the *Harlequinade Pas de Deux* or as Swanilda for her piquant personality and dancing to make itself felt. Yet her range is by no means limited to the lighter repertory, and she has appeared with surprising success as Giselle, where she revealed an almost unexpected sense of style.

Perhaps no choreographer has ever quite exploited her talents, although her husband, Wolfgang Brunner, came close to it in *Les Deux Errant*. Yet, by way of compensation, she has always had since her early days with the Ballet Rambert the perfect foil and partner to her dancing in John Gilpin.

Antipodean losses

Two people who have done a great deal for the dance, in their respective ways, in Australia, recently died within a few weeks of each other.

EDOUARD BOROVANSKY

EDOUARD BOROVANSKY, who died in Sydney on December 18 at the age of 57, was affectionately known as "Boro" to many of his dancers. He was also variously referred to as being a shrewd business man, the ruthless and arrogant dictator of Australian ballet, a showman with a scathing tongue, a theatrical genius, and the "Father of Australian dance". Each judgment is in some degree correct, and whatever one may think of such qualities, one thing is certain — some mixture of them is absolutely indispensable in the director of a large ballet company.

He was born in Prerov, in Czechoslovakia, the son of a minor government official. At the age of nine his father sent him (against his will, he claimed) to study under Berger and other teachers at the Prague Theatre. By the age of 24 he had become one of the leading dancers of the Czech National Ballet. In 1926 he forsook this organisation and its pension rights to join Pavlova, and in 1932 he joined the Colonel de Basil Ballets Russes.

In 1938 he decided to make Australia his permanent home with the idea of training Australian dancers and forming a company. So he and his talented wife, Xenia Nicolaeva (a relation of Pavlova's) gambled their savings to equip a large studio in Melbourne — she teaching and he producing. Eventually they added a small stage for Sunday workshop performances which prospered immediately. In 1943, the Borovansky Ballet's period of professional activity began when the J. C. Williamson management engaged the company for long tours of Australia and New Zealand.

Borovansky exerted a strong and immediate influence on Australian ballet. Stronger still, and more lasting, has probably been the effect of his policy on its psychological scheme. His repertoire was dominated by the favourite Fokine/Massine works of the Ballets Russes, and it is for this type of ballet that the Australian public still shows a marked preference.

Under his leadership the company staged the following works: *Carnaval, Les Sylphides, Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Princess* (complete versions), *Casse-Noisette* (Lichine complete version), *Coppélia* (Acts 1 and 2), *Le Beau Danube, Prince Igor, Graduation Ball* (with its original décor), *La Boutique Fantasque, La Symphonie Fantasque, Les Présages, Schéhérazade, Petrouchka, Francesca da Rimini,* Pavlova's *Autumn Leaves* and *Giselle.* The English repertoire was only temporarily represented by *Façade* and *Pineapple Poll.*

As a dancer, he is best remembered for the rôles he created in *Le Beau Danube, Francesca da Rimini* and *Scuola di Ballo,* and for such character studies as the Shopkeeper in *La Boutique Fantasque* and Pierrot in *Carnaval.* From time to time he attempted to create his own ballets, none of which enjoyed any popular success. But even when these were set in Australia, as were *Terra Australis, The Black Swan* and *Ned Kelly,* they featured all the characteristics of inferior Ballet Russe works. *Ned Kelly,* for example, an outlaw who has become the figure of an Australian myth, featured such incompatible ingredients as rural realism, an allegorical figure of the Spirit of Justice (a girl *sur les pointes),* and country square dance.

But though he did brilliant propaganda for ballet in Australia and proved that his faith in the Australian dancer was fully justified, his attempts at encouraging local choreography were negligible. Without doubt, Borovansky will be remembered chiefly not as a choreographer or teacher, but as a producer of Russian ballets with a shrewd eye for their style, and, what is so often ignored here, for their correct casting.

At its best, the Borovansky Ballet was a highly organised machine, led by a group of talented Australian and foreign principals, capable of presenting superb reproductions of such works as *Le Beau Danube, La Boutique Fantasque* and *Petrouchka.* At its worst, productions showed a disturbing tendency to be overdressed in expensive taste rather than designed in good taste, and in such works as *Coppélia* or *Giselle* there was a complete disregard for artistic detail.

The company went as far as Borovansky's strong personality and gifts could take it, but in recent years his outlook and orbit became more limited. He was complacently unaware of his limited artistic vision and made little attempt to get the world's best dance brains into his company's service because, unfortunately, he was by temperament often incapable of appreciating the artistic contributions which others could make. He was hostile to criticism and disliked both English critics and English dancers, preferring to recruit Continental or American dancers when necessary.

This dapper little man, with his alert sense of humour, side-whiskers and glossy egg-shaped head, made himself virtually the indispensable figure in Australian ballet. It will be difficult to think of Australian ballet without him.

Since 1943 the following dancers have at some time been principals of the Borovansky Ballet: Kathleen Gorham, Peggy Sager, Vassilie Trunoff, Miro Zolan, Paul Grinwis, Paul Gnatt, Royes Fernandez, Elaine Fifield, Jocelyn Vollmar, Claudie Algeranova, Serge Bousloff, Léon Kellaway, Algeranoff, David Lichine, Yurek Shabelevsky, Kenneth Melville, Laurel Martyn, Dorothy Stevenson, Charles Dickson, Iovanka Biegovic, Paul Hammond, Tamara Tchinarova, Kiril Vassilkovsky, Robert Pomié, Sandra Vane, Martin Rubinstein, Jeffrey Kovel, Estella Nova, Mary Duchesne, Graham Smith, Edward Miller and Audrey Nicholls.

E. C. M.

GERTRUDE BODENWEISER

GERTRUDE BODENWEISER, director of the Bodenweiser Modern Dance Company, died in Sydney on November 10 after suffering from a heart complaint for some time. She was reported to have been 73.

Coming from Vienna, she was one of the pioneers of Central European modern dance. She made her début in 1919, subsequently worked as a choreographer for Max Reinhardt, and in 1925, was appointed First Professor of Modern Dance at the Vienna State Academy of Music and Drama, being the first woman to be awarded this post.

While her influence was great, she must not be thought of as still another propagator of a new system of dance training along the lines of Laban and Jooss. She was a performer rather than a philosopher, and her reputation was largely based on the creative and highly attractive personal style which she evolved, and which strongly influenced many of her students. Many of her ideas were thought provoking and she was an unwavering adherent to the ideal of free expressionism in the dance.

She left Austria when Hitler took over, and formed the Bodenweiser company — the Tansgruppe Bodenweiser — which made extensive tours of Europe, and also Japan, South America and Australia. At the outbreak of war she was in Australia. She settled in Sydney, which became the headquarters of her school and company, and from there she toured New Zealand, South Africa and India.

One of her last works to be danced was Menotti's *Errand into the Maze* on the Australian TV network: an expressive but pessimistic work on the theme of man's attempt to find his way out of the directionless labyrinth of modern life. Former dancers of her company in Britain are Hilde Holger, Bettina Vernon and Evelyn Ippen.

E. C. M.

Fonteyn on Two Screens

Continued from page 19

selves as the Blue-Birds. Finally, Derek Westlake, Terry Gilbert and Robert Harvey, presented the Ivans effectively as robuster comedy material than is normal.

Once again, I did not care for Jane Scrase Dickins's costumes, which were in a baffling variety of styles. But then, I imagine that in a production as ambitious as this, she could not have possible designed every costume: those for the "Rose" Adagio Princes had obviously been ordered by post from a theatrical costumier's.

But, to my mind, the most disappointing feature of this interesting production, which I hope to have the opportunity of seeing again, was the way in which the crowds (no less than 82 dancers were used) often cluttered the screen. It was not so bad when they were used solely to dress the stage. But when a solo is given a moving background of attendant figures, and the quicker the movement behind, the more perceptibly worse is the effect, the whole screen becomes a jumble. Foreground and background become one — then, who can tell, what is happening? The attempt at spectacle smothered the dance far too often.

E. C. M.

THE ROYAL BALLET at Covent Garden

Linden in Firebird

FIREBIRD, Diaghilev's first serious attempt to present a ballet on a Russian theme, is a collective work in the sense that its libretto was assembled in a haphazard way from a number of folk-tales. The result, according to Benois, was that their circle only succeeded in creating another fairy-tale for children. "Its characters," he writes, "are remote from the audience—one does not believe in them and therefore it is impossible to suffer with them." Whether the characters are able to excite sympathy or not may not cause anyone much anxiety today — nevertheless, this view that *Firebird's* chief fault lies in its plot would certainly be borne out by some features of the Royal Ballet version, in which Anya Linden made a very successful début on December 15.

While it continues to be as magnificent a danced spectacle as ever, it would appear that after 75 performances the characterisations have become somewhat blurred. Somes, on his first entrance as Ivan Tsarevitch, gives the impression that he is just marking time until the *pas de deux*. Though his overall conception of the rôle is sound, it does not go far enough.

At the opening I should like him to be a more ordinary, puzzled figure in the shadows, who conveys a greater sense of shock on first sight of the Firebird. This prince is brave and sly and ready to play with fire. Climbing into the mysterious garden (which practically cries out for a unicorn !), he does not know what he is to find. The creature he pinions in his arms gives him a symbol of power in exchange for her release. If this new-found strength, with which he successfully woos the Tsarevna and defeats the "immortal" Köstechei, could be depicted the rôle would gain in substance and conviction.

Anya Linden's Firebird was the most impressive since Nerina's. Her physical beauty was a tremendous asset — notably the aristocratic setting of her head on her shoulders, with handsome throat and profile very evident. Her line, moreover, which has always been her most promising aspect, is more decisive and theatrical, while she has gained immeasurably in attack and musicality. Her entrance, as she leaped across the darkened stage, had an exhilarating, scintillating quality. As Benois has written : "The dancer must . . . show her capacity for flying, but, at the same time, her every movement must be tied." Linden certainly suggests these characteristics in the *pas de deux*, which, alas, also seems to have the faint air of a flirtation about it for her attempts to escape seem rather half-hearted. And later, on the same topic, it didn't appear that Somes was especially anxious to flee from the garden.

Linden is not yet the flaming phoenix Karsavina is purported to have been, although she probably comes close to suggesting the element of Eastern languor, which Karsavina is also said to have had in her interpretation. Although her performance was surprisingly promising, she seemed to tire slightly in the final moments, especially when compelling Köstchei's subjects to dance. I should like her to devour the stage a little more : to be more exotic or perhaps more barbaric.

Her headdress looked as though it had been sat upon, but the worst feature of her performance was irritating finger movements — rather as though she was flipping soap-suds off them — throughout her first solo.

Vyvyan Lorrayne in her first performance as the Tsarevna may have had the misfortune of being eclipsed by Linden's success. She danced the rôle very efficiently; however, she gives a rather saccharine, more demure and self-effacing interpretation than her numerous predecessors, all of whom, incidentally, have been taller than she.

Les Patineurs, which opened the programme, was notable for the usual excellent performance from Brian Shaw, and a very well danced "White" *pas de deux* by Merle Park and Donald MacLeary : the latter not treading on his own feet or looking embarrassed during the rather unattractive "trotting" promenade movement. But, for this ballet's sake, even more important is the fact that Debra Wayne's *fouettés*, now interspersed with a few *grandes pirouettes relevés à la seconde*, have improved.

E. C. M.

Three Cinderellas

SOMEONE turned on me sharply the other day and said : "You and Peter Williams always find *something* to criticise ! Why can't you be nice for a change?" And yet all I had done was to express mildly that I thought it would be a pity if Ashton's *Cinderella* were to be completely relegated to the status of a Christmas show. After all everyone — even a critic — is entitled to his own opinion, and it's not as though I've got anything else nasty to say about the revival of *Cinderella* on December 23. But in the circumstances I suppose I had better not make even this gentle protest. So with what might be construed as an excess of Christmas spirit let me rest content with saying everything was marvellous. In fact, it pretty well was !

Every time *Cinderella* is revived, Ashton seems to change it around a bit, and, curiously enough, these changes are nearly always to the ballet's advantage. Last year one of his major alterations was to omit the Fairy Godmother's variation, and true to form one of the major changes this year has been to put it back. This is the third variation the Fairy Godmother has had since the ballet started eleven years ago, and on the whole I think it is the best. When last year Ashton allotted the rôles of the Ugly Sisters to women for the first time, so breaking the previous tradition of pantomime dames, he made very few changes in the choreography. Now these parts have been better assimilated into their new gender, and their whole choreography has been made more emancipated. Some of the costumes have also been renewed, and the décor for the second act re-made, retaining Jean-Denis Malclès' original design, yet realising it with a more flattering perspective.

As I wrote at length on Fonteyn and Somes in *Cinderella* this time last year, I have not got a great deal to add now. Fonteyn was probably even better than before — there is a rarified refinement about her dancing which, coupled with the wonderful humanity of her acting, makes her present standard of performances that completely absorbing spectacle of a great dancer right at the peak of her career. At least I *suppose* this is the peak, but Fonteyn has been so full of surprises in the past, so apt to make quite unpredictable leaps into some new territory of interpretation, that it would be a brave man who could be sure. Quite possibly in 1970 I shall find myself writing: "But *this*, this really is the pinnacle," and then by 1980 I might have been proved wrong again.

It is quite a few years since Somes, any more than Fonteyn, has been technically the best dancer in the company. And yet, equally like Fonteyn, he has continued to improve over the years. This Christmas he actually appeared to be dancing better than last, while his interpretation is constantly maturing. His greatness is not in his skill at portraying a prince, but in that he portrays a man who *is* a prince. Where other dancers are content to project a noble bearing, Somes projects nobility itself.

Cinderella and her Prince have also been danced by three other couples during the season, although I have not yet seen Nerina and Blair and will have to reserve comment on them until next month. Svetlana Beriosova first came to the rôle last season, and this Christmas has consolidated her remarkably successful début. She had a sweet and touching poignancy in the kitchen scene, making an attractively aristocratic waif, and produced some splendid dancing for the ballroom. Where I thought her interpretation had gained ground over last year was in the slight differentiation she appeared to make in her dancing between this act and the last act *pas de deux*. In one, Cinderella is just a girl at her first ball, in the other she is a young woman facing the happy-ever-after of fairy-book marriage. This difference, more or less exactly the same as that found in *The Sleeping Beauty*, provides the rôle's only interpretative difficulty, and Beriosova has now come closer to solving it than anyone, apart, of course, from Fonteyn.

Her partner, Donald MacLeary, was making his début as the Prince. In a sense this is the most difficult male rôle in Covent Garden's full-length repertory, simply because it is the least rewarding. Only Somes has achieved total success, and it would be unfair to expect MacLeary to show more than promise. His entrance was well done, and he brought the same *panache* to his solo, even if this was not quite as well danced as it might have been. His partnering was good, yet not so impeccable as in *Swan Lake* or *Sylvia*, while his interpretation proved, as yet, very tentative. On a small point of detail, I should say he needs to be rather careful of the way he uses his hands, which sometimes are somewhat self-conscious and affected.

Anya Linden's Cinderella also gave me a great deal of pleasure, which in this case was greatly increased by the realisation that it possibly marked the end of a very sticky patch in her career. For some time — two years is it? — Linden has been dancing either in or under a cloud. Like many others she is not inherently musical, and although this difficulty could be overcome, it appears to have taken her a long time to jump the hurdle. Now, to judge not only by this but one or two other recent performances, things at last seem to be going Linden's way, and she is picking up, as it were, the threads of her promise. At this *Cinderella* everything was musically ship-shape except the occasionally waterlogged orchestra, and it was a particular joy to watch Linden's personality, so diffident only a few months ago, expanding out to fill the opera house. What has happened to Linden is not the rapid transformation that overtook both Fonteyn and Nerina — she is, after all, too

young — but at last it appears that her star is pointing upwards, and this, in its quiet way, was a richly enjoyable performance.

I expected too much of Desmond Doyle. Recently I have seen him give such superlative out-of-town performances of both Florimund and Siegfried, that I had every hope that his Prince Charming would be on the same level. Unfortunately it was not, yet it was still a comfortably good few notches above what he produced when he first danced the rôle a few years back. Curiously, he, like Linden, is a dancer whose early promise had previously been dimmed. His season with the touring group in the provinces has done him a power of good, transforming him as a dancer. His performance was especially notable for its confident masculinity, and he partnered extraordinarily well. However, his vigorous dancing lacked something in style and his characterisation was a little sketchy.

Ballet can be damnably unfair. Both Alexander Grant and Brian Shaw danced the Jester, and in almost every way Shaw might be thought the better. He jumped a little higher and travelled slightly faster. He actually performed steps that Grant just sketched in, and his acting, in its own way, was equally intelligent. Yet Grant gave by far the more memorable performance. The difference between the two is that Shaw acts and dances the part excellently; Grant, on the other hand, lives it completely. In his case acting and dancing are integrated together in an identification with the character. Partly this is because Grant, perfectly cast, gives a great total performance, whereas Shaw, not perfectly cast, merely gives a very good one. And partly it is because, on the physical level, Shaw's very fluency seems to tell against him in this. Shaw cuts through the part like a knife through butter, while Grant produces an exciting devil-may-care attack; he recklessly hurls himself over the steps where Shaw runs down them, he bounces where Shaw bounds. Yet perhaps ballet is not so damnably unfair after all. For Grant's Jester is only one of the two most brilliant pieces of male dancing in the Royal Ballet repertory, and the other is Shaw's Blue Boy in *Les Patineurs*.

Both of the Ugly Sisters this season were newcomers, with Gerd Larsen in the dominating Helpmann part, and Rosemary Lindsay in the rôle created by Ashton. Larsen as the virago had by far the more difficult task, and this part has always proved the more elusive. She gave a promising first impression which improved as the season wore on and she started to lose her original inhibitions. Lindsay also improved, and by the end she was giving a marvellously funny and genuinely touching performance. This dear, dappy creature, more a maiden aunt than ugly sister, was immensely lovable. Although it was a very original and personal portrayal, it contrived to convey much the same impression as did Ashton himself in the part.

Another extremely successful newcomer to the ballet was Annette Page as an exceptionally gracious and charming Fairy Godmother. She danced Ashton's new variation with immaculate assurance, and throughout proved just the Fairy Godmother that any self-respecting pumpkin would be proud to own. Georgina Parkinson, who alternated in the rôle was also strikingly good, even though she did not bring to it the same crisp authority as Page.

The assorted seasonable Fairies were admirable. Both Merle Park and Doreen Wells proved fine as Fairy Spring, with Park perhaps having the more *éclat*; Antoinette Sibley danced beautifully as Fairy Summer without quite achieving the languorousness of Elvin; Debra Wayne produced some remarkably good individual moments in a Fairy Autumn variation that as a whole was perhaps a little too disorganised and untidy; Christine Beckley, cool as an icicle and as even as snow, danced with great elegance to score an unqualified success as Fairy Winter.

The Prince appears to have taken Dorothy Parker's advice to heart, and more or less got himself a completely "new set of old best friends". Among the gentlemen involved were Gary Burne (the only survivor from last year's Court), Bryan Lawrence, Keith Rosson, Graham Usher, Richard Farley and Christopher Newton. All concerned danced well, but it was a particular pleasure to see Bryan Lawrence's splendid jumps and to note that Farley has overcome the difficulties that used to make his classical dancing such a hit-or-miss affair.

C. B.

THE ROYAL BALLET
Touring Company
at the Granada, Woolwich

HOW is one to describe the Granada, Woolwich, to people who have never seen it? To the unwary traveller approaching it along Woolwich's thriving main street, it may appear to be — well, just a cinema. A high oblong, pointless tower points skywards melodramatically, while the main bulk of the building cowers below, glowering sulkily at the local Odeon across the street. Entering the building, our traveller comes into a spacious modern foyer, where gold, pink and green positively assault his senses, and his eye is caught by a central kiosk placed boldly in the centre, where they sell ice-cream and pop-corn. Then he enters the auditorium, and the veils fall away from his eyes — he finds himself in one of the most surprising buildings in Europe. Here is a Gothic fairy palace — a riot of what might be called Raspberry Hill revivalism. It is like a cathedral. How fascinating are those two fine Gothic arches (one quaintly labelled LADIES and the other, did you guess? GENTS), the unbelievably fascinating chandeliers, the stained glass windows, which are made to light up when the houselights are put out.

Perhaps it was these unlikely surroundings that affected the itinerant Royal Ballet when it opened its week's season on December 28 with *Swan Lake*. Or perhaps the company had just been overeating during the Christmas holiday. But whatever the reason the first act passed by with all the zip of a slow-moving hearse. Audrey Farriss and Elizabeth Anderton were both somewhat off-form in the *pas de trois*, while their partner Donald Britton, despite his jaunty assurance, looked sadly miscast. Robert Mead, leading the *pas de six* with Brenda Taylor, provided an even bigger disappointment. Untidy and straggling, this was a far remove from the exceptional promise he showed when he first joined the company.

During the first interval I realised with dismay that this performance — so proudly labelled "Royal Ballet"—was not always as good as those which International Ballet hopefully touted round the provinces immediately after the war.

Yet there was one vital difference between this *Swan Lake* and the ones which International Ballet gave us over a decade ago, and this difference became apparent during the second act, when Lynn Seymour made her first wonderful appearance as Odette. I admired her Odette/Odile when I first saw it last year at Covent Garden, and it is gratifying to be able to report that it has even improved since then. She was dancing with an almost awe-inspiring sense of grandeur; there was a broad, imperious sweep to her movements, her arms beat the air powerfully, and she had the free, plastic quality that is so characteristic of the Soviet Russians. Her acting as Odette is now much more impressive, and she really does convey the tragic ambivalence of the enchanted Swan Princess.

Naturally this is still not a fully-fledged performance — she could, for example, use facial expression to fuller and better advantage — and her technique, although strong, is not faultless. Unlike all the other Royal ballerina-aspirants, Seymour still has a certain difficulty with her feet, which are notably less perfect than her flowing *port de bras*. These technical limitations, minor though they may be, took a little of the gilt off the gingerbread of the *Black Swan pas de deux*. This, however, had many of the stylistic qualities of her white acts, even though at this performance she was unable to reproduce the tremendous air of bravura I noticed some months ago when I saw her in the *Don Quixote* last year. Moreover, her acting in the black act proved a little too muted; she should aim at the exotic *dame fatale* glamour which Elvin used to give Odile.

Seymour's deeply-felt last act crowned a performance of great achievement and staggering promise. It is very greatly to the credit of the touring Royal Ballet that it has been able to develop such a talent, and in some ways this may be thought of as a justification of the company. Clearly some dancers thrive on the concentrated opportunities the company can offer. (Incidentally I find that the month before last we suggested that these opportunities were rather more concentrated than they in fact turned out to be, and our reference in passing that Lynn Seymour had danced Aurora in the full-length *Sleeping Beauty* was not accurate. She has in fact only danced the *pas de deux.)*

Seymour was superbly partnered by Desmond Doyle, another dancer who has found this company greatly to his advantage. Seeing his Siegfried for the first time, I was immediately impressed by his unaffected, manly presence. He strides around the stage as if he has the ground-lease of the theatre tucked away in his doublet, and even if his handling of the Royal Ballet's mumbo-jumbo mime system is no clearer than anyone elses, at least it is confident. His only serious blemish as a partner is to occasionally expose the mechanics of his craft, so that his sure hands can sometimes be seen too obviously assisting his ballerina to achieve that extra turn. His lifting was exemplary in its effortlessness, and like the rest of his partnering had a sense of simple courtliness. Unlike, say, Ronald Hynd, Doyle's acting is neither particularly subtle nor telling, yet there is an adequate dignity about everything he does. And when he comes to dance in the third act, he contrives to give a most powerful impression of *joie de vivre*, and every exultant step proclaims the young prince in love. It was also, particularly at the second performance I saw him give, danced with a very strong technique, including the first *entrechat huits* I have seen since the retirement of John Field, an exhilarating elevation.

Although, apart from these two principals, the performance as a whole fell below the adequate, Donald Britton and Audrey Farriss brought a lively flourish to the Neapolitan Tarantella, although they were

not too much helped by a cornet player who sounded as though he had ice-cream stuck in his instrument. Yet the whole playing of the band was so abysmal that I cannot help feeling that Emmanuel Young might have done better had he sent them back to the Musicians' Union with an appropriate note, and accompanied the performance himself on the mighty Wurlitzer organ which was standing unused in an uncompromising position in the middle of the orchestra pit.

On the next night the company gave *Swan Lake* again, when Susan Alexander took over the part of Odette/Odile. This was far from the best performance in a ballerina rôle I have ever seen in a Royal Ballet production. This is unpleasant to write, the more so because the performance was obviously appreciated by the audience.

Although it may sound like hypocrisy, I honestly have no wish to be discouraging about Susan Alexander, who clearly is a promising dancer, as was proved by many passages in her performance in *The Sleeping Beauty* which I saw in Sheffield. And obviously the management of the Royal Ballet must have complete confidence in her abilities to sustain ballerina rôles, for no dancers except Fonteyn and Beryl Grey, and then in very different circumstances, have ever been awarded the rôles of Giselle, Swanilda, Aurora and Odette/Odile at such an early age. Nor is there any doubt about Alexander's technical facility to dance these parts, but at the moment — and I stress once more that this is only one person's opinion — she seems quite unable to bring any sense of style, or what is generally called interpretation, to these ballerina rôles.

That Alexander really does have great promise was shown by her far more than able dancing in the *Black Swan pas de deux*, which provided moments of sheer physical excitement that were missed by both of her contemporaries, Seymour and Sibley. And her dancing very often had a good-natured honesty which shone through all her distressing affectations, such as sticky fingers, flicking wrists and coy smiles. One day she may well emerge from the cocoon of cotton-wool that appears to surround her, to startle us all, and I will be as delighted as her most ardent supporter. Yet I still think that she has not only been given too much, too soon, but that — more important from my viewpoint — her standard of performance at present is not up to the minimum level any audience has the right to expect from the Royal Ballet.

Apart from Doyle's stalwart Prince, the best performances came from Graham Usher in the *Pas de Trois* — the most impressive I have yet seen from him — and an excellent Neapolitan duet from Pamela Moncur and particularly Johaar Mosaval; Simon Mottram led the *pas de six* competently, and it was a great pleasure to see William Wilson leading the Czardas. The company is very short of the kind of maturity dancers like Wilson can bring.

The two performances of *Coppélia* at the end of the week provided a surprise as soon as the curtain went up on the matinée. The company has now got a touring version of Osbert Lancaster's Covent Garden settings and costumes, but these have been so deplorably executed and made to look so tatty, that I could not help wondering whether Lancaster had ever seen or authorised them. Swanilda's cottage has been reduced to a shanty, and one might be forgiven for imagining it to be an unmentionable outhouse to the inn. Dr. Coppélius's house is now a mass of peeling stucco, and the backcloth of the last act is dampened by what looks for all the world like a fall of heavy snow. According to the programme the scenery was painted by Alick Johnstone, and a pretty poor job he made of it. The costumes needed starching and pressing and, particularly in the last act, hung limp and bedraggled.

CINDERELLA AT THE BALL: Margot Fonteyn and Michael Somes in the second act of Ashton's Cinderella *which was revived at Covent Garden for the Christmas season. Photo: Mike Davis.*

There were two new Swanildas on view, Audrey Farriss in the afternoon and Elizabeth Anderton in the evening. Farriss produced plenty of her own brand of *jolie-laide* charm, yet her dancing was a little hard and her acting looked too contrived. She was definitely at her best in the last act, where she danced with a crisp authority.

By contrast Elizabeth Anderton was at *her* best in the first two acts. She is an unusually intelligent dancer and approaches every part apparently from basic principles, which make her performances a refreshing change from the stereotype follow-my-leader characterisation that the Royal Ballet is too apt to produce. As Swanilda she showed plenty of comic invention, much of it genuinely funny, but her actual dancing was just a little disappointing. I was expecting someone a good deal stronger technically, a good deal more coruscating. Yet she has recently had a foot injury and this may account for the tentativeness of some of the dancing.

She had the great advantage of being supported by Henry Legerton's engaging and brilliant Dr. Coppélius. Legerton made me laugh almost uncontrollably when, finding Franz stubbornly remaining awake after being doped, deftly hits him over the head with the bottle. Yet Legerton was not just funny, and right at the end of the act when he gestures to the two lovers to let *his* doll alone, he struck one of those moments that make ballet worthwhile. Gordon Aitken, the afternoon's Coppelius, tried hard but it was not in the same class — or even the same school.

Alexander Bennett partnered Farriss well and danced with attractive vigour in the last act. Graham Usher — not quite at his own best form in his variation — acted splendidly, with far greater freedom than he has ever done at Covent Garden.

All these performances in Woolwich represented, I think, good achievements by the dancers in the extremely difficult circumstances, and the immediate management — John Field, Henry Legerton and Lorna Mossford — have obviously worked wonders to keep the company even at its present level. But, but, but, these were not the performances one is entitled to expect from the Royal Ballet. Two months ago I raised in these pages the question of whether a suitable provincial touring repertory could ever be made from full-length Maryinsky classics, and what I saw in Woolwich made me more than ever certain that it cannot. **C. B.**

One-acters on Tour

FOR their short post-Christmas tour before flying to South Africa, the touring section of the Royal Ballet had, as always, their fair share and more of traditional works — three or four *Swan Lakes*, three or four *Coppélias*, week after week. As de Valois once remarked in a different context, pity the poor dancers.

With the scenery and costumes of many of their ballets already on the high seas, they found themselves even lower than usual on the other ingredients of a balanced artistic diet — just one night a week, in fact, of rather dusty revivals. The main interest, consequently, of the performance I saw at Woolwich on December 31 was in the many new casts on display.

In *A Blue Rose*, Lynn Seymour was dancing the *pas de deux*. Less intense than Anne Heaton, who brought to the ballet a passion too grand for the slight music, Seymour displayed a touching and somehow vulnerable gravity which was entirely in keeping. There is something extraordinarily exciting in the flow of her movement and in the perfect composition of her every attitude. Although physically small, she is a big dancer: big in that she fills out every movement properly and also in that she can dominate the stage simply by her natural presence without any exaggeration or affectation. Simon Mottram gave her adequate support, although he lacks the gift for plastic movement and bold gesture which Donald MacLeary showed in this

part. I liked Alexander Bennett's performance of the boy who gets the rose first and last; his dancing had a light and easy style appropriate for this debonair boy who is only playing at love.

The *corps de ballet* looked cramped and muddled on this stage: they contribute little to the action, and I wonder whether Peter Wright's choreography might not have seemed better if he had dispensed with a chorus.

Blood Wedding was revived in a slightly revised version omitting the trees from the fourth scene (the fight) and elaborating a little the rôles of Death and the Moon. This does not entirely remove the clash of realistic and symbolic characters which is the ballet's weakness, but it at least mitigates the worst improbabilities of the action.

Annette Page danced the Bride for the first time. This is the sort of rôle that can only be built up properly over a series of performances, but Page looks right, acts convincingly and already has some excellent moments. Her strongly stabbing *pointes* and her fiercely arched body in many lifts brought out all the intensity of her encounter with Leonardo in the first scene. Donald Britton repeated his superbly virile and detailed interpretation of Leonardo; Alexander Bennett as the Bridegroom had not quite, at this showing, the forceful brilliance for the drinking solo at the wedding, but came off better in the fight.

The other works on the programme were the *"Aurora" pas de deux* (with Alexander and Bennett) and the least subtle performance of *Façade* I can remember seeing for years. Britton clowned outrageously as the Dago, and far too many of the other dancers just let their parts go for nothing. Audrey Farriss had one delightful moment as the Debutante, when she gave absolutely no reaction at all to being turned completely upside down and then dropped unceremoniously on her feet again. Elaine Thomas danced quite well in the Polka, but didn't really get around to any characterisation, whereas William Wilson and Terry Westmoreland in Popular Song were overacting their boredom with the weary little dance routine — this can be much funnier if simply done dead-pan.

There were also casts new to me in Yodelling, Waltz and Fox Trot, but in kindness to the dancers involved it seems better not to name them. The same is true of the girl who danced the Two Step in *Blue Rose* and the players of the Bride's Father and the Groom's Mother in *Blood Wedding*. Some of these appeared to be in parts beyond their present capabilities, others were presumably not sufficiently rehearsed in the interpretation of their parts. If I were artistic director of the Royal Ballet (which seems unlikely enough for my assertion to be perfectly safe), I should not like my company to be judged on the strength of performances like these. But I hope that I should know whom to blame for it — and I do not mean the dancers.

John Percival.

MIDNIGHT GALA
at the Lyric Theatre, London

IT was Margot Fonteyn, I gather, who suggested to Roland Petit that a midnight gala should be organised to aid the victims of the Fréjus flood disaster. So Petit stayed behind after his London season ended and, with Peter Hall and Leon Hepner, organised a show with Canadian choreographer Paddy Stone as producer and nearly every theatrical star currently appearing in London taking part. It began, at 11.30 on Tuesday December 15, with Sir Laurence Olivier performing his famous Archie Rice act, tap-dance and all, and ended in the small hours of December 16 with the dancers from *Pieces of Eight* giving one of the numbers from that revue.

Somewhere between these items came two passages of especial interest for ballet-goers. Fonteyn and Michael Somes (he had already danced two ballets at Covent Garden earlier in the evening) gave their *pas de deux* from *Birthday Offering*. I say "their" *pas de deux* because in this choreography Ashton has distilled the essence of their work together in so many other ballets. It is characteristic of these two dancers that they chose a piece suitable to the occasion, even though it has been out of the repertory so long that it must have entailed extra rehearsals; it is characteristic, too, that in spite of the small stage and the fact that the only accompaniment available was a piano (played by Jean Gilbert), the duet was danced as beautifully as ever.

In complete contrast to this grave and formal duet was the "bedroom scene" from *Carmen*, danced by Renée Jeanmaire and Petit. There was, in fact, no bed, just an empty stage and some inspired lighting, but this made no difference at all to the most erotic of all dances, most of which is, in any case, very much *à terre*. How strange it was to see Petit again without that nose — and what a manly, commanding Don José he has become! And what a delight to see Jeanmaire dancing again: Jeanmaire the provocative, Jeanmaire the insolent; Jeanmaire sullen, Jeanmaire teasing, Jeanmaire impassioned, ardent and magnificent. Her figure has perhaps thickened a trifle, and is no longer that of the *jeune fille* who created the rôle in London, yes, more than

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a decade ago — but I can still imagine no one to dance Carmen as she does.

Who but Petit, I wonder, would have given his heroine, for her big solo, choreography based so largely on the steps we usually associate with male dancers — *tours en l'air* and repeated beats? And who but Jeanmaire could make, of such a dance, one of the most feminine and seductive moments in ballet? **John Percival.**

SCHOOL DISPLAYS

THE LEGAT SCHOOL

MADAME NADINE NICOLAEVA-LEGAT is an exponent of the Legat-Johannsen system of tuition, and on December 12 pupils from her residential school at Tunbridge Wells gave a London recital at King George's Hall.

The marathon programme featured Act 2 of *Giselle,* the *Don Quixote* and *Casse-Noisette pas de deux* and *Les Sylphides* plus folk dances, Strauss waltzes, Hungarian rhapsodies, a plastique *pas de deux* titled *Moonlight,* and a classical but "turned in" version of *Madame Butterfly,* and other items.

I must confess that I fail to see the value of giving young dancers classical *pas de deux* which are tests much too severe for their strength. In this case none of the dancers was over 16, and most of them were going through either the spindly or puppy-fat stages. While the classics, especially *Don Quixote,* provided some spine-chilling moments, the performance of *Giselle* proved an exception. Both principals, Anna Aragno and Tony Binstead showed quite remarkable promise. Anna Aragno went through all the tricks associated with the rôle with brash precocity and great skill. But though she knows how to catch up the hem of her skirt in a jump, her approach was, not surprisingly, immature and sometimes devoid of feeling. Tony Binstead showed all the marks of eventually becoming a *danseur noble:* he has a good appearance and an intelligent approach to characterisation, but at the moment must concentrate on tidying up technique and gaining strength.

The folk dances, attractively arranged by Valentin Prorwitsch, were of an incredibly high standard. Although these provided some purple patches of amusement — a tarantella in tartan trousers and a Spanish costume which appeared to have been made out of a Union Jack — they were danced throughout with verve and a complete absence of inhibition.

Other dancers who showed promise were Chesterina Sim Zecha, Wendy Moses, Bronwen Curry, Jennifer Bayne, Sigrid Monckton and Domini Winter. **E. C. M.**

TELEVISION

The principal recent TV production of ballet was The Sleeping Beauty, **given on December 20 and reviewed on pages 18 and 19. Other recent TV dancing appearances have been:**

ALICIA MARKOVA paid her fourth visit to *Music for You* (BBC) on December 9 in the *pas de deux* and final *ensemble* from *Les Sylphides* with Vladimir Skouratoff and the Ballet Rambert. The producer, Patricia Foy, managed to capture some nice close-ups of Markova, some good perspective shots of the *corps,* and a clearly visible chalk mark down the centre of the stage.

In a recent Sunday paper feature on the men behind commercial television, at least two of the chiefs professed to regard ballet as one of their greatest pleasures in life. How courageous of these men to see that their favourite art is not desecrated for it is rarely seen on the Independent Channel now! Nevertheless, two brief novelties appeared in amongst commercials for such items as beauty soaps guaranteed to ensure a successful marriage.

LE BALLET MODERNE DE PARIS, with the well-known modern dancer, Françoise, as soloist, danced *Solitude,* a funeral extract from the dancer's own ballet, *Dans la rue,* with bluesy music by Maxine Saury and décor by Dan Snyder on *Chelsea at Nine* (or *Half-Past!)* on December 17. Françoise went doggedly through her non-descript choreography, while dancers in mackintoshes walked about in groups with their backs to the camera. Its apotheosis consisted of a deadpan Françoise sprawled out on the ground.

COLETTE MARCHAND appeared on ITV on December 20 with George Reich and Vassili Sulich. The costume she wore for this plumage-cajolery number, which I guess was created for the Olympia Music Hall, may be seen in resplendent turquoise on the back cover of the latest Serge Lido album. Reich and Sulich, stripped to the waist and brandishing armfuls of ospreys, leaped in and out of vision, fought for her and snatched her from each other's arms. She hardly paid them the slightest attention as she went through all the grinds and bumps of this hollow choreography, with the cameras closing in for friendly shots of her bust. **E. C. M.**

Dance and Dancers . . . IN FRANCE

THE PARIS OPERA

ABSENT from the repertoire since the summer closure, Lifar's *Chemin de lumière* made a welcome return on December 9. Josette Amiel (the Young Girl) and Claire Motte (the Woman in Yellow) successfully danced their usual rôles. Jacqueline Rayet, replacing Claude Bessy as the Woman in Red, has delicacy and finesse, but lacks the sensuality this rôle demands. Peter Van Dijk finds many opportunities in this ballet for showing off his expressive qualities and fine technique. The inventive *pas de deux* between him and Lucien Duthoit, who gave a good portrayal of Death (the Figure in Black), remains the highlight of this work.

On the same night, Attilio Labis, with Claude Bessy, made his début in *Soir de Fête* (Delibes, arr. Busser, Staats/Aveline). Though not yet fully confident, he showed to good advantage his *ballon* and broad *jetés.*

LYCETTE DARSONVAL

THE programme at the Opéra on December 16 was offered as homage to Lycette Darsonval, and never was the honour more merited. In fact, since the tragic death of Emma Livry in 1863, the Parisian public had come only to appreciate foreign ballerinas, reserving, rightly or wrongly, the secondary rôles for French dancers. Following Rosita Mauri and Carlotta Zambelli, Olga Spessivtseva left no successor to her *Giselle* in 1932. After the brief reign of the Soviet star, Semeyonova (1935), Jacques Rouché arranged an audition. Thus the Opéra gave Darsonval her big chance and she showed herself worthy of the honour, outshining the charming Dynalix by her verve and precocious authority. Since that time she has shown a special talent for romantic ballet.

Lifar, who dedicated *Oriane et le Prince d'amour* to her and for whom he revived *Sylvia,* also supplied her with two of her most important rôles, the Duchess in *Joan de Zarissa* and Dulcinea in *Chevalier errant.* The list of her creations, dramatic as in *Phédre,* or purely classical as in *Suite en Blanc,* to all of which she brought such *enthusiasm,* would be too long to record here. As a dancer, teacher, directress of the Ecole de Danse, she has zealously served this noble house, which she entered as a "petit rat".

It is perhaps to be regretted that the programme assembled brought an even more melancholy and tragic tone to the evening. The *défilé* of the company succeeded *The Pas de Quatre, Conte Cruel* and *Les Sylphides* — all described elsewhere in this issue. The farewell closed with Act I of *Giselle,* superbly danced and interpreted by Darsonval, who was partnered by George Skibine.

After the performance the whole company surrounded this ballerina, who showed great emotion. Three "rats" offered three bouquets — blue, white and red — while on the stage and in the auditorium both artists and public applauded interminably. After the last curtain, Mr. André Malraux, in the presence of the dancers and technicians, presented Lycette Darsonval with the red ribbon of the Légion d'Honneur.

JEUNESSES MUSICALES DE FRANCE

ON December 3, under the auspices of the Jeunesses Musicales de France, Peter Van Dijk received an enthusiastic welcome for appearing in the joint capacity of dancer and choreographer. After dancing a piece from Gluck's *Orphée* with Claude Bessy, which he has just created at the Opéra-Comique, he then made some improvisations on a given theme, following the suggestion of some members of the audience. During this brief recital he offered several of his recent creations. These included a very pure interpretation of Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony,* with Jacqueline Rayet, the work which recently won him the Prix de la Critique, and which remains his major achievement. Then, with Bessy, Lucien Duthoit and Cyril Atanasoff, he staged Ivan Séménoff's *L'Echarpe,* a work commissioned by the Jeunesses Musicales two years ago. Madeleine Lafon and Duthoit then showed their virtuosity in the *pas de deux* from *La Favorite.*

The programme ended with two new compositions. Charmed by Tchaikovsky's symphonic poem, *Fatum,* unknown outside Russia, Van Dijk has built a dramatic interpretation of this work. Being presented in a hurry, the work appeared loosely constructed, although it featured some very attractive solos and *pas de deux.* This cannot be said of the dazzling *Pas de cinq* (Weber), which was danced with the desired precision and verve by Lafon, Rayet, Duthoit, Atanasoff, and Van Dijk himself. Peter Van Dijk now combines a mature musical sense and great invention with a most winning sense of humour. As the first performance of *Le Peau de Chagrin* is still delayed, this work would be ideal for the Opéra Comique's repertoire.

NEWS IN BRIEF

AT The Hague, Serge Lifar is now working on *The Moor of Venice,* with music by Maurice Thiriet, for the Nether-

lands Ballet. Lifar is also preparing for the centenary celebrations of the return of Nice to France, which will be held on June 15. On December 3, he lectured at the Sorbonne before a large student audience, with demonstrations by Yvette Chauviré, Claire Motte, Tessa Beaumont, Youly Algaroff, Attilio Labis and M. Meyer.

ON December 12, Ludmilla Tcherina left for Moscow, where she is to dance *Giselle* at the Bolshoi Theatre with Steven Grebel. Following a tour of the USSR, she is to dance in Berlin and at the San Carlo Opera House in Naples, where she will appear in *Le Martyre de Saint-Sébastien,* the work in which she made her first appearance at the Paris Opéra.

M. JULIEN, the Administrator of the Opéra, has refused to approve the contract offered to Liane Daydé and Michel Renault by his predecessor, M. Georges Hirsch. As the Finance Department of the Ministry was unable to approve it, the two dancers are claiming 25 million francs from the direction of the Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux as compensation. It seems that there is no hope of a reconciliation. The two dancers appeared at the farewell gala for Béatrice Bretty at the Comédie-Française on December 11.

At the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, Maurice Béjart has created a new version of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps,* with décors by Pierre Caille after René Magritte. The company of the Mannaie, augmented by some members of the Ballets de Milorad Miskovitch, was led by Tania Bari and Patrick Belda. **Marie-Françoise Christout.**

Owing to the indisposition of Arthur Todd, the news from America has had to be held over until next month.

METROPOLITAN BALLET

Continued from page 22

less strong than before in supporting soloists, especially on the male side.

There were some redeeming features to the season. Beriosova danced the second act of *Giselle* (which had been mounted for Danilova at the Empress Hall) and showed a sincerity and tenderness which made me want to see her dance the rôle again on a more suitable stage and with a better partner — a wish not fulfilled until nearly seven years later. Andrée Howard created a new work, *Ballamento,* a classical dance suite which looked very well in the choreographer's simple scenery and costumes and had some very felicitous moments.

Also, the interesting experiment was made of letting two members of the company try their hand at choreography. Hyrst's *Topaz,* a plotless work to some pretty music by Burgmüller, showed promise but was overlong and not fully developed into a personal style. Michael Holmes' *Trio Détruit,* on the other hand, was successful enough to be taken into the regular repertory. Based on a poem by Browning, with a score specially composed by John Lanchbery, it made a coherent dramatic point and the inevitable influences of other choreographers (in this case, principally Tudor) were reasonably well assimilated. The leading rôle, that of a jealous queen, gave Celia Franca a chance to show her dramatic gifts which had too long remained hidden.

In the third and last week of the season, the Swedish ballerina Elsa-Marianne von Rosen appeared as guest, and the *pas de deux* from *Flower Festival at Genzano* was mounted for her and Danton. Metropolitan thus became the first English ballet company to present any of Bournonville's choreography.

During the Hammersmith season, Metropolitan were rehearsing a new ballet by the American ballerina Rosella Hightower, then appearing at Covent Garden with the Cuevas company. This had a story by Peter Williams, scenery and costumes by Leonard Rosoman and a score specially composed by Lanchbery. Its contemporary setting, in an amusement arcade, won the company some much-needed publicity with a colour photograph on the cover of one of the weekly illustrated magazines. ("Ballet of the Juke Box" was the caption, if my memory serves.)

Pleasuredrome, as the new ballet was called, had its première at Harrow in October. It was not a great ballet, but it showed at least an awareness that modern life could serve as a setting for ballet. It provided several members of the company with first-rate rôles, especially de Lutry as Nick, the country boy who gets fleeced and beaten up. Above all, it was entertaining.

The company also took *Beau Danube* into its regular repertory, with both Beriosova and Franca as the Street Dancer, Hyrst as the King of the Dandies and Witaly Osins as the Hussar. Osins, a newcomer to the company, was a big man with an imposing presence and plenty of dash and elegance. One of Massine's most popular ballets, this should have proved a decided asset to the company.

Towards the end of November, Metropolitan opened a season at the People's Palace, Stepney. Beriosova and her father had to be in America on private business, and a young American dancer, Patricia Wilde (now a leading soloist with New York City Ballet) was engaged as guest artist. She had not at that time the authority or the feeling for Odette, but she gave an interesting and well-danced performance and she made an excellent First Hand in *Danube.*

The company were once again dancing really well. Even *Coppélia* showed more life, with Callaghan as a promising Swanilda and Holmes an intelligent Dr. Coppelius. The restored general level of performance made it all the more sad when the news broke that the company could continue no longer.

The trouble, of course, was money. An autumn tour of Holland had coincided with a spending spree caused by the end of clothes rationing; the public had no money left for theatre going, and even one disaster of this nature was more than Metropolitan could stand. **(To be continued)**

GREEK TAVERNA DANCING

Continued from page 15

Thracian settlers of Phrygia—who in turn brought it back to Greece on the instructions of the League of Nations. Scholars say the word Zeybek itself may possibly be Phrygian meaning god—zey and bread—bek. Taken farther, this could be translated as heaven and earth; spirit and body; intellect and emotion; God and man. All this gives the dance a symbolism both mystic and earthy. Are these men in the Taverna dancing in their mothers' wombs in homage to some early mother goddess, who later became Hera?

The dance of the "Rebetes" (the word literally means the unruly or undisciplined) sprang up overnight in the cheap tavernas of the seaport where homeless refugees first washed ashore, then crept ten miles inland to Athens. From there it spread like wildfire throughout the country, much to the consternation of puzzled officials.

The *Zeybekiko* "Rebetes" meant revolt against organised society and bourgeois conventions that seemed to allow no place for the refugees. But all of Greece, oppressed and overrun for centuries, conquered and broken since the fall of Constantinople, took to a dance that expressed such uncompromising individualism, such defiance of authority, such self-expression of love, pity and fear.

During the German occupation, the *Zeybekiko* reached its height of popularity when the common people began to think of it as a form of subtle resistance—something the conquerors could not understand or take part in. To the young children, watching their fathers dancing this token resistance, it has become in their maturity instinctive and indigenous. In a short thirty-five years, *Zeybekiko* has become Greece's national dance—whether the officials like it or not

Ballet Dates

THE ROYAL BALLET
at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

January
20 *Coppélia* (Park, Burne), *Façade* (Helpmann)
23 **(M)** *The Prince of the Pagodas* (Linden, Hynd)
23 **(E)** *Cinderella* (Fonteyn, Somes)
26 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
28 *Pineapple Poll, La Fille Mal Gardée* (world première)
30 *Pineapple Poll, La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair)

February
1 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
3 *Les Sylphides, La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair)
6 **(M)** *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Page, Hynd)
6 **(E)** *Les Sylphides, La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair)
9 *Pineapple Poll, La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair)
11 *Pineapple Poll, Les Rendezvous, Petrushka*
13 *Les Sylphides, La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair)
15 *Les Rendezvous, La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair)
17 *La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair), *Façade*
20 **(M)** *Coppélia* (Linden, Blair), *Façade*
23 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Linden, Blair)
25 *Danses Concertantes, Giselle* (Fonteyn, Somes)
27 **(M)** *Danses Concertantes, Giselle* (Page, Hynd)
27 **(E)** *Les Rendezvous, Petrushka, Pineapple Poll*

March
1 Annual Gala in aid of the Royal Ballet Benevolent Fund
3 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Page, Hynd)
5 **(M)** *Ballabile, Giselle* (Seymour, Trecu)
5 **(E)** *Ballabile, Giselle* (Fonteyn, Somes)
8 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)

BALLET RAMBERT

January
25 The Repertory Theatre, Perth

February
1 Arts Council Scottish tour of one week
29 King's Theatre, Southsea

March
7 The Palace, Watford
14 The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
21 The Opera House, Leicester
28 Essoldo Theatre, Southport

April 4 Her Majesty's Theatre, Carlisle

LONDON'S FESTIVAL BALLET

February
8 Streatham Hill Theatre, Streatham
15 The Hippodrome, Brighton
22 The Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon
29 The Hippodrome, Golders Green

March 11 — May 31 South American tour, including seasons in Mexico City, Caracas, Lima, Santiago, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janiero, Sao Paulo

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January
18 The Gaumont Theatre, Southampton
31 The company leaves for a 16-week tour of South Africa

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NERVI (Genoa): Company directed by Leonide Massine, July 8 to 28.

July 8-10: *Decameron*
13-14: *Il Barbiere de Siviglia*
16-17: *Les Sylphides, Bal des Voleurs, Scheherazade*
22-14: *Cimarosiana, Choreatium, Le Beau Danube*
27-28: *Laudes Evangelii*

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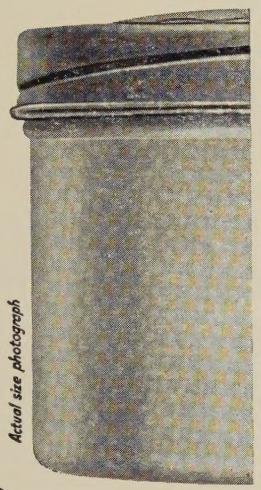

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